WORDEATER
32
NOT
NOW!

WORDEATER XXXII

STAFF

Nancy Lockhart
Dan Miner
Janice LeFevers
Mary Martin
Pat Mulder
Judy Belfield
John Stobart

For this issue, to get a submission accepted, four of the above had to vote for acceptance.

Present manuscripts or cover designs for Number 33 to John Stobart in room C1069 by October 17, 1980. Manuscripts will not be returned. They may be anonymous. They should be typed.

Poetry and Prose winners receive awards of $25.00. If there should be more than one winner in a category, the winners share the award.

Cover design awards are $10.00 per cover.

John Stobart alone is responsible for these judgments. Loudmouth McKracken, however, thought it wise to note that past award winners do start with a handicap.

There is a tie for the poetry award:
Judy Belfield
Nancy Lockhart
Bob Newsome
Sue Soucie
Sue Carlson

And also for the prose award:
Coleen Fabrycki
Debbie Gibson
Tom Ditsch
Pat Bohler
Sue Carlson

Each of the above poetry and prose awards will be $5.00.

Cover designs were submitted by: Judy Belfield.

The Wordeater is collated in "C" hall. We appreciate the help of those who regularly help collate these issues, and invite all students and writers at JJC to join us as we put the Wordeater together.

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COLEEN FABRYCKI

IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH

I was struck down by the flu bug last winter and my husband struck out as a substitute homemaker. Marcus is a dead loss around the house! Well, that's not exactly right. If he were dead, our loss would be the permanent bump on the couch.

Marcus knows nil about running a house. Running? The last time Marcus took a brisk walk was when the tornado hit!!

And lazy! Marcus is so lazy he had an electronic opener installed on the lid of the john.

His idea of making a bed is just yanking the covers up over himself.

But he's a considerate guy and that day he was really trying. (Normally he's just very trying.) He crawled out of bed early - I heard his knees bumping down the stairs - to get the kids off to school.

Luckily the driver noticed one of the bundled-up kids Marcus tried to put on the school bus was wagging it's tail.

Then he put the garbage in the dishwasher and compacted the china.

Our three-year-old ran into the bedroom giggling to tell me that Daddy fed the Chicken of the Seas to PussyPaws. Thank God I was too sick to eat lunch!

In the afternoon Marcus sprayed the windows with Endust, flooded the laundry room, and waxed the wallpaper.

At least he had one success. The kids loved his creamed baloney over popcorn.

But I still can't figure out how making popcorn started an oven fire!

The next day I staggered out of bed to call his office and tell his secretary Marcus would be back at work. It really wasn't very nice of me to hang up on the poor woman when she was crying like that.

But I had to call Happy Housecleaners. They took one look at the shambles and exercised their right to refuse service.

Next, I called my mother and asked her to buy me a big supply of vitamins. Since I'm married to Marcus, I'd better Well Be.

Then I went outside and put up the FOR SALE sign.

***

The house didn't sell. Spring returned and it was renewal time again. Time for me to renew my annual battle to get Marcus to clean up the yard.

Every year it's the War of the Roses- to prune or not to prune. Marcus claims pruning gives him diarrhea. He'll try anything to get out of yard work.

He even asked the NAACP to declare spading racist!

When he's forced to trim the hedges, he hedges on the trimming. He only lops the tops. Last year a busload of tourists detoured past our house just to see the eighteen-foot-wide hedge.

Marcus hates any yard work, but his very favorite pet peeve is mowing the grass.

So one year he bought a goat. (Now there was a real peeved pet.) The goat ate the tires on the kids' trikes. It ate the sand in the sandbox. It didn't eat the grass!

Then one day it ate the feather pillows I'd hung out to air. The goat obviously didn't get full on poultry feathers so it chomped down my prize flowers for dessert.

That was the day the goat died of chicken phlox.

Then there was the time Marcus tried to order a horde of locusts from the zoological supply house. They promised to ship them - in seven years.

Child-power was Marcus' next solution. Gleefully, he promised a ten-speed bike to the neighborhood kid who could pull the most grass from our lawn.

Too bad word got back to the police chief that Marcus was recruiting little kids to supply grass - and paying them off with speed!

Last year Marcus got out of mowing for five weeks. The poor guy was in the hospital. He tried burning off the grass, you see, but his plan back-fired on him.

This spring, Marcus decided to make the work a family affair. (What else was left to try?) My assignment was "Weed and Feed."

Well, I pulled them and served them, but Marcus refused to eat them.

It made me mad when he said my father should take care of last year's leaves because he's such an old rake!

Then he suggested we use my mother (She's not that fat!) to roll the lawn.

That steamed me. I went home to Mother and sobbed my heart out on her laps.

The next day Marcus called and pleaded with me to come back. He even apologised for saying that U.S. Rubber recycles Mother's old girdles into tank treads.

"How's the lawn?" I asked cautiously.

"You won't even recognize it," he promised. "It's beautiful! Smooth, weed-free and green!"

And it was. I pulled into the driveway just in time to see Marcus happily waving goodbye...to the painter and the men in the cement truck!

***

con't.

Needless to say the house still didn't sell. I gave up. The weather was getting warm. The kids were busy with end-of-school activities. Marcus' activity was warming the couch.

Obeying my constant admonitions to never get in a car with a stranger, our seven-year-old walked three miles home from Brownies.

It wasn't Nancy's fault she didn't recognize Daddy in an upright position.

So Marcus vowed to spend more time with the kids!

Saturday was the BIG DAY! He promised to devote every minute to the children. He even arose early to share their breakfast.

Marcus gamely gulped down a bowl of nutritional cereal the kids shoved in front of him. Unfortunately, his caffeine-conditioned system rebelled.

After his Total recall, Marcus clapped ten-year-old Tommy on the back (He saw the gesture in an old Mickey Rooney movie.) and suggested they get up a neighborhood baseball game.

Tommy gathered the kids, and they choose up teams.

Poor Marcus. Even the girl with the broken arm was picked before him. The kids got suspicious when he tried to organize the batting order - alphabetically.

When the catcher signaled by scratching his skull, Marcus offered to loan him his Head & Shoulders.

Marcus wanted to pitch, but they made him play outfield - over on the next block!

Surprisingly, Slugger Thompson actually hit one that far. I could hear Marcus yelling, "I got it! I got it!"

He didn't.

"What happened?" I queried as the boys carried him in the door and deposited his limp and moaning body on the couch.

"It was a fly ball, Mom..." Tommy started to explain.

"Yup." Slugger agreed. "Hit him right in the fly."

"And did he bawl!!" the kids chorused.

"Never mind, Marcus," I consoled. "Why not entertain Nancy for awhile."

Nancy eyed him critically. "Aren't you the guy who tried to kidnap me?" she asked.

They started with jacks, but Marcus couldn't get past his onesies. Next Nancy skipped her rope. Marcus only tripped his.

Hula-hooping didn't work out either - and I ruined the saw removing it.

When Nancy suggested hopscotch, Marcus sighed with relief and headed for the liquor cabinet.

When Marcus drinks, he fancies himself the hero of a swashbuckling cloak and dagger movie. After hopscotch Nancy helped him into the house. There he stood - my hero - the kneebuckling soak with a stagger!!

Still, Marcus valiantly pursued his day's commitment - although he prudently gave up sports. He decided the best way to spend time with three-year-old Beth Ann was to tell her stories.

But Marcus can't keep anything straight (not even his posture). Beth Ann now believes that Little Red Riding Hood is a Mafia dwarf on the run - with Communist connections!

And Mickey Mouse arrived during the potato famine.

Would you believe he told her Little Bo Peep was a voyeur!?

But even Beth Ann wouldn't buy the story that Sleeping Beauty could drink enough to get a hundred-year hangover.

Marcus looked dejected. "Don't worry, honey; it takes time," I comforted, handing him a diaper. "here, you can change the baby."

"Baby!" Marcus stared blankly for a moment. "So that's where you were in April."

****

COLEEN FABRYCKI

PRO MOTIONS

A typist, adept at rotations,

made many in cloakroom locations.

Her work was so vital

it earned her a title...

Director of Pubic Relations!

****

SUE CARLSON

TWISTED TWILIGHT

The lines separating life from death
are, at best, shadowy and vague. Who
can tell where one begins and the
other ends. Edgar Allan Poe.

Summer sunsets didn't settle properly with Aggie anymore. Since the incident with Alyson and Zeke, the slow struggle of the light to deny the dark no longer held vampirish delights. Aggie still heaved a relieved sigh as nightfall conquered, but no longer sought to witness the silky summertime spectacle. Winter eves were different. She could handle the stark abruptness of the cold scenes which appealed more to her young, impatient tastes anyway. Like the electric action of a switching train, the winter darkness seemed comfortingly more final. Anxiously, Aggie avoided July's sun-moon interminglings - except on the fourteenth, of course.

It had been three years now. Strange how everyone remembered birth and wedding anniversaries, no one sent sympathy anniversary cards. Aggie absently thought she might start the practice if she remained rational after today's outing. July fourteenth was a shattered promise - and Aggie never took promises lightly. So year after year she had kept a ritual memorial visit to Alyson's new home. From the beginning of the sun's decline to the engulfing blackness, Aggie dared to recall that once was.

To an outside observer, the image Aggie presented bordered on picturesque-like the contrived grief of the Kent State girl.

In the battered cemetary, amidst quiet boughs, she bent over a headstone so grainily fresh that it stood out. Something else in the atmosphere seemed amiss. No matter how they tried - Aggie tried with a delicate brown sundress, loose hair, free feet, the young never can blend into the cemetary scene.

Blending into an artist's conception was not the foremost thought in Aggie's mind as she felt the sun caressing her lower back into a brittle blister. Alyson always enjoyed a good healthy burn though Aggie saw no particular joy in it. Alyson died with a fresh healthy burn. The tomb inscription left that out. It left everything important out. Her fingers angrily tried to change the engravements, but still only:

ALYSON INGLISA JOHNSON
BORN 1962
DIED 1977

stared back off her worn, spindly fingers.

How stupid! Aggie supposed Alyson felt comfortable here, frozen under the humid earth she loved, surrounded only by the clumsy ancientness of traditions she held, but Aggie knew that it just wouldn't do. Cremation, Reincarnation... Angie laughed to recall how appalled Alyson had been with such "outrageous" ideas. They blended concepts well together, though.

A pinkly dying cottonwood flower fell upon Alyson's grave. Grave, grave, grave - Aggie felt something much too somber in the word to describe her friend's house. Somehow Alyson still didn't seem gone. Usually, Aggie pictured Alyson as she saw Zeke, or all of her past, for that matter: Faded ideas that still lived somewhere, somehow. Like the uneasy awakening that comes after seeing dream characters who come only to advise on the business of life walking the city streets, Aggie felt awkward picturing Alyson dead when she knew it simply could not be. She still lived in at least one memory.

J-O-H-N-S-O-N. Script letters fell into Aggie's mind as the sun fell deeper into dark clutches. It had to be Yo-han-sen, not John-son to suit Alyson's Swedish tastes. Though Aggie was Swedish, the only thing Swedish about her was her surname - Thompson. Lutfish, lingunberries, Bondost cheese, and Saint Agnes's day were a few of the mysteries unlocked by Alyson. Sharing art through a spittle-dripped india ink straw, and music in a sound-sealed basement, they taught life to each other at fourteen and shared death at fifteen.

A bitter chill ran through Aggie's body. Nothing was around this abandoned ruin to disturb her. She felt different out of the city. She loved the lights, the action, the beauty in the mire, but she despised the bone-weary twelve hour work day life she led there. Her day off was spent remembering younger days in a still young life. Still as beautifully ugly as the time they traipsed through the city, soldering a weak bond of friendship on a Walk for Mankind, the city had let too many escape through the highway exit ramps. Aggie's older friends took on distant college campuses while a guilt-striken Zeke ran-just ran- off into the wilderness after the accident.

Aggie never did like cars, and Alyson had HATED Zeke's new Hornet AMX. Zeke's old Volvo had led them to Aurora for a

con't.

mad-shy replacement. Ready for retirement, the Volvo had brought enough happiness to the trio with hazy horseback riding days, cool canoeing nights, and wildly drunken flights through the arcades of the city.

The Hornet's first big trip was marked on July fourteenth of Aggie's Sierra Wildlife calendar as "Indiana Dunes-Sand," (the sand would be there, of course, but not sandwiches) right before the fifteenth's "PINK FLOYD - binocs." Somehow they never got around to that long awaited concert. Aggie still had the three unused tickets. For some insane reason she couldn't bring herself to tear them up and toss them out, and it felt wrong to throw anything out without tearing it up. Sometimes she wished the Floyd had played the thirteenth; Alyson loved them and they might have been too tired to travel the fourteenth, and the car wouldn't have been anywhere near Weber and Renwick the following day, and, and, and...All is circumstance.

They DID go to Indiana Thursday, though. The day was a groggy delight of riding down lost roads waiting to be found, running the shoreline listening to all the gossip going on, rushing through bottles labeled "White Lightning" waiting to come down. In a whirl of mudpuddle thought, they decided to leave. They knew tomorrow would be a big day. In fact, it loomed larger than they could ever conceive.

Twisting down sun-tarred roads, Alyson sat cross-legged in the front bucket forever playing with the gadgets Zeke's car had to offer while Aggie enjoyed the whispering wind with the relaxed unconcern only non-drivers can enjoy. Lights, lights, lights. Alyson moaned as they came on the highway to light a path through the Golden Oldie music pouring out of the radio. Soon they would invest in a cassette deck. Aggie flushed the hand out of her hair wondering why Golden Oldie days only came in summer. Oh, it didn't matter much anyway. The long gone Gallery poured out "Nice to be With You" as the night ate pieces of the day. Nice, yeah, nice.

Zeke decided it was time for headlights. It wasn't exactly dark yet. It was the time of night when Aggie could only read the New York blackout headlines scattered in the backseat under passing lights. It was the time of night when the sun still teased like a dying barbeque fire that either needs a shot of Kingsford or some gasoline - depending upon which commercials one watched. It was the time of night when no one RE'LLY needed headlights, but everyone swore at those who didn't have them on. It was light enough, though, that if one considered swearing a mortal sin - as Alyson did - one would find oneself in hell. It was twilight.

"Indiana Wants Me," one of those songs like "Motorcycle Mama" that plagued Aggie for an author but not a place in her past, hit the radio...

"Indiana wants me,
Lord, I can't go back there
Indiana wants me,
Lord, I can't go back there now"

Zeke turned it up as we pulled away from Weber and Renwick, only to be pushed back. The rest seemed like a carnival ride gone mad for Aggie, filled with scratching, scraping, shatters, shits, and "Indiana Wants Me." She heard everything but Alyson's dying sigh.

It didn't occur to her or to Zeke that Alyson could be dead - they weren't - but her head hung limp in the bloody frame it cut through the windshield. Alyson just wouldn't stop bleeding. Aggie yelled, pleaded, and cried for her to stop it. Then she melted into shock. The lightless driver of a white '67 Mustang rescued Aggie and Zeke from the side-tilted mess. Aggie was a problem in her semi-coherent state; Zeke was overcome. Together they stood barefoot in burning battery fluid; together they knew they would never be together again. A straight line is not the same as a triangle. The sun was gone.

With a start, Aggie realized the sun was almost gone. Ashamedly, she thought of how much this easier this ritual had become. Half-heartedly, she pondered staying in the blackness - Alyson seemed to be hovering about, coloring every turn of her memory with her artist's charcoal pencil. Aggie had seen <u>Night Of The Living Dead</u> one too many times to stay. Filled with enough troubles to fill the coming year, Aggie felt the cold granite stone and walked under the cottonwood boughs to the twisted path. She climbed into her personal suicide machine, a Datsun we-are-driven B2-10, flicked on the lights, fiddled with the radio. She thought she must get a cassette deck as "Don't Have to Live Like a Refugee" poured into the blackness. The gravel felt gritty in the torrid summer night; she headed over the state line to a cook-out. Aggie felt more like blacking out, but it was her only night off, and anyway, she had promised.

******

SUE SOUCIE

NOW THAT I'VE GROWN OLD

When did my Innocence go?
Where did it go?
Where does my childhood go,
When I am grown?
What happens to my life time
when no longer do I live?
When did my Innocence leave
Replaced by my heart of stone?

Tear drops of salt
and bitter wine -
Days I recall -- no longer
mine to enjoy
Where has my youth disappeared,
replaced by doubt
and much fear?
Where has it gone?
Did it fade with dreams I can no longer remember?

My life hasn't yet begun --
Now, it's over.
Where did my childhood go
Now that I've grown old?
When did it leave?
Where does it go
when love has died?
Does it wash out --
like the tide
upon the ocean's floor?

Can't I seize it in its flight --
Can't I hold it in my hand --
Now that I've grown
too old to dream --
too young to die --
too stately
and much too wise to cry.

****

SUE SOUCIE

LOVE

I have known that you
wanted to be...
And have often watched you...
watching me.

I have seen you laugh,
And I have seen you cry,

But worst of all...
I have seen you die.

***

TOM DITSCH

HAIKU

The fall of snowflakes
Parachuting like soldiers
Ends in quiet peace.

COLEEN FABRYCKI

WITHHELD EMOTIONS

There is a voice
within a space
so tiny
it has no exit.

And that voice
cries
and calls
within its confinement

til finally
volcanic eruption
spews
it out

along with the cushions of lava
which
promptly
bury it.

****

NANCY LOCKHART

WHAT DISTANT PART OF ME

What distant part of me
That always was or maybe
Ever shall be
Knows
And sings in whispers
Of gift-wrapped sunsets
Or rising water-color dawns
What unexpected hour
When I become
Like Lazarus?

****

DEBBIE GIBSON

A JOURNEY INTO THE FORBIDDEN

Round and round the circle
Completing the charm
So the knot be unknotted
The cross be uncrossed
The crooked be made straight
And the curse be ended.
T.S. Eliot
"La Figlia Che Piange"

PART I

A swirling mist beckoned the oncoming dusk as a light appeared in a second floor window of the quarrystone mansion. The antiquated house lay nestled amid a vast wood. Silence reigned the estate except for the occasional whispered sighs of the river that flowed through the dense forest. In the single-lit room a middle-aged man paced a faded carpet, an old German Shepard faithfully at his side.

A haunted look masked his face as he tiredly thumbed the pages of a well-worn book. In a gesture of defeat he tossed the book on an ivory quilt that covered an ornate but somewhat tarnished brass bed. The leather-cracked cover flipped open as the journal landed on the bed, revealing a washed-out picture of a young girl. Captioned beneath the photograph were the words, "Helen Waldendorf, 1863-1880." The man stared sadly at the yellowed portrait. The realization of being Jake Waldendorf, the great-nephew of the ill-fated Helen Waldendorf, was a ceaseless nightmare. One which proved to be hopelessly inescapable.

Sighing heavily, he turned his attention to the array of books piled on a desk in the corner of the room. Wearily, he seated himself and began to rifle through a book on psychic phenomenon, pausing now and then to take notes in a fraying black ledger. The sudden bark of the dog aroused him from his work. He looked up to find the hound excitedly whining at the window. Rising, he went to the window and drew back the lace curtain. Perplexed at finding nothing amiss in the gathering gloom, he returned to his work. The dog continued to bay at his invisible foes.

Less than half a mile away, a bedraggled young man wandered aimlessly along the river embankment. As he watched the sun slip from sight behind the treetops, he dropped exhausted to his knees on the forest's damp undergrowth. He had walked all day, stopping only for a brief rest in the late afternoon. Two days earlier Carl Franklin's canoe and supplies had been confiscated by the rocks camouflaged beneath the foamy, swirling waters of the rapids. Luckily he had made it to shore without injury, only to lay gasping for air as his canoe disintegrated and coursed quickly from sight down the river. Salvage of anything impossible, his remaining option was to trudge the riverside in search of habitation.

Carl stroked the stubble of beard on his face and tried to ignore the pains of hunger cramping his stomach. Night had arrived, and he dreaded it. He could feel the fear rising inside of him as his thoughts returned to the previous night. Then, the quiet forest had seemed foreboding, shrouded in the inpentrable black of night. He had dozed fitfully, waking often to strain his ears for a sign of life. None had come. He shuddered at the thought of a repeat performance.

A chill wind ruffled the leaves, urging Carl to rise and pace the woods for warmth. As he walked briskly, rubbing numbed hands together, his heart began to race. He thought he could hear the muffled, distant bark of a dog. Standing quiet and alert, he listened for another sign. In a few moments the bark rose again above the rustling groans of the glade. Noting the direction of the cries, he carefully tramped toward them through the thick underbrush.

As he slowly made his way round heavy foliage, his brain whirled at the folly of his escapade. On impulse he had left the bustling sidewalks of Chicago two weeks earlier, lured by the dreams of adventure he felt he would find in the rugged, Canadian wilds. Knapsack on back, he had hitchhiked to Tobin Lake in the Saskatchewan Territory. After renting a canoe and purchasing supplies, he had started his journey down the Saskatchewan River, in a state of exhileration. That had been five days ago, yet it seemed an eternity.

Angrily breaking a branch that had slapped him in the face, Carl tried to conjure up that initial sensation. It failed to materialize. Disgusted, he vowed to keep his love for nature strictly confined to the campus zoology texts. In two months he would begin his senior year at Northwestern University. Shame heated his cold body. He had

con't.

bragged to his closest classmates about his trip. Now he would have to face their ridicule over his ineptitude.

He tripped over a rotting log and cursed the moonless sky. The perpetual labyrinth unnerved him. Carl walked faster. A loud, distinct bark heralded him as he stumbled from the grasping, claw-like branches of the crawling trees. About a hundred yards ahead loomed a rambling, stone house. He broke into a run, his eyes glued to the lone light shining from the second floor. He found a door and began to pound his fists against its weatherworn panels, oblivious to the tears of relief swelling in his young, tired eyes.

Jake started in surprise at the unexpected, insistent rapping. Setting his work aside, he nervously shuffled through the dark house. Puzzlement etched his pale, lined face. A knock on the door was a rare occurance for Jake. He received few visitors, and they were preceded by invitation only. He turned on the entry hall light and brushed imaginary creases from his starched, immaculate shirt. The dog had followed him, strangely quiet since the first knock had reverberated through the still house.

Jake opened the large oak door and cautiously peered around its corner. Seeing the unkempt lad, eyes pulsating with fear and relief, brought waves of compassion sweeping over him. The dog pushed his way through the crack of the door and licked the hand hanging limply at the boy's side. As if he had been in a deep sleep, the young man quickly came to life and began to pet the dog's large, welvety head. Giving Jake an imploring look, he said, "Excuse me, sir. My name is Carl Franklin. I've been lost in the woods for two days. I had an accident on the rapids. Lost all my gear. Could you help me please?" His hands rose in a gesture of platitude as he uttered the last few words.

Upon seeing the dog's instant acceptance of the stranger, Jake knew in his heart that the lad's appeal was genuine. Opening the door wider, he motioned for Carl to enter. "Please come in. My name's Jake Waldendorf, and I call my friendly beast here Rufus," Jake said in a tone of sobriety. He shook Carl's proffered hand. "The two of us will do what we can to make you comfortable for the night. Tomorrow I'll drive you to the nearest town, Wipawin. Reliable authorities will give you the necessary aids to overcome your dilemma. Follow me, please. You can refresh yourself while I prepare a dinner for you."

With these abrupt words Jake turned and started down a long hallway. Carl followed, bewildered at the somber, direct attitude of his host. He was deposited at the bathroom with a fresh change of clothes. As hot water sprayed from the ancient showerhead and warmed his shivering body, Carl pondered Jake's peculiar character. The older man's withered grey eyes seemed to convey a warmth, a friendliness. Yet he spoke in a formal, almost standoffish fashion. It was an odd combination. Carl stepped out of the claw-footed tub and vigorously dried his goose pimpled flesh. A fresh rash of chills attacked him as he switched his thoughts from Jake to the house.

It was definitely Gothic. An eerie atmosphere pervaded its timeworn timbers. It possessed a more ominous quality than the maze-like night woods. Carl quickly dressed, shaking his head over his wild thoughts. Maybe food would dispel his qualms. His nerves were on edge from lack of sleep and nourishment. His imagination was running amuck. This was a simple, old fashioned hountry home inhabited by an intelligent if somewhat eccentric man and his friendly dog. Didn't Rufus' bark guide him out of the hellish forest? Wasn't he greeted with a warm lick on the hand and an invitation of shelter for the night? With this reinforcement, he decided to locate the kitchen. But a cloud of apprehension hovered over him as he snuffed the wall lantern and left the bathroom.

He found Jake in the kitchen, a meal prepared and waiting on a pine drop-leaf table. Carl nodded his thanks and hungrily eyed the bountiful fare. Jake silently busied himself at the sink. Carl ate slowly, careful not to gorge himself after days of fasting. Disturbed by the taciturn climate, Carl began to talk about himself. He spoke slowly, pausing frequently for a bite of food. Jake listened attentively and was soon seated at the table, engrossed in the younger man's stories in a shy, unaccustomed manner. He seemed delighted to hear Carl was a biology major, and even chuckled over his past college pranks. Carl relaxed. Things were brightening. The gloom dissipated into the dark recesses of the room.

Realizing their talk revolved around himself, Carl asked, "What about you, Jake? I've been chattering away about myself and I haven't given you a chance to talk."

A veil of caution fluttered over the old man's wizened features. His serious grey eyes darkened, then slowly refocused to their usual warmness. He timidly glanced at Carl and cleared his throat, "There is nothing of great interest in my existence. Rufus and I pursue lives of solitude. I read, write and maintain the

con't.

house and grounds. I make a weekly trip to Nipawin for our necessary supplements. Any arrangements for publications of my work are transacted by mail. A very simple life, I assure you."

Carl's eyes sparkled fervidly. "You mean you're a writer? What have you written?" He leaned forward, eager to hear more of Jake's romantic revelation.

Jake's face filled with a wise humor at the show of youthful exuberance. "I have written numerous tales of fiction. Their royalties provide me with a modest income. Like all writers, I have aspirations to create 'the novel' that will cast me in the league of the immortal writers." Remorse resounded in his voice. "As each year passes, I find my dream is, still, just a dream." The corners of his mouth twitched courageously as he lifted his eyes to the shadowy ceiling. A faraway expression glazed them. "Milton expresses my sentiments quite eloquently in this passage:

'What though the field be lost?
All is not lost; th' unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else not to be overcome?'"

He dropped his eyes to Carl's face. Embarrassment flushed his pale cheeks a faint rose hue. "From his famous 'Paradise Lost,'" he whispered softly.

"Yes, I recognized it," Carl assured him. But Jake's intensity had resurrected the phantoms of dread Carl had tried to evade the entire evening. Stifling a feigned yawn, he politely asked if Jake would mind if he retired early. Muttering profuse apologies for keeping him from his needed sleep, Jake escorted Carl upstairs. He left him, with a subdued good-night in a quaint, high-ceilinged bedroom.

Carl surveyed his comfortable surroundings. The walls were papered in a mint green floral, based by high, maple mouldings. The carpet reflected the same refreshing green. Antique maple furniture, rich and glossy, enhanced the coziness of the room. It was a welcome haven. He dropped on the bed, closed his eyes, and tried to analyze the different emotions bombarding him. None of the night's elements formulated to sedate his troubled mind.

He heard a soft scratching at the door. Silence. In a few seconds it happened again. He opened the door and Rufus bounded in. He circled Carl at a run and suddenly stopped to look up at him with moist, pleading eyes. He headed for the door, turning quickly to make sure Carl followed. The dog trotted downstairs and dashed to the kitchen. He made a beeline to his water dish, clenched it between his canines, and brought it to Carl. Carl patted his head and filled the empty dish. With a last affectionate tug on his ear, Carl left the happy dog.

Carl climbed the stairs and started down the long, dim corridor to his room. The walls were ornamented with family portraits and landscape oils. He slowed his pace, halting often to examine those that caught his attention. He noticed that one portion of the wall was covered with a tapestry slightly larger than that of a doorway. He stood against the opposite wall and examined the hall. The hanging was centered between his bedroom doorway on the left and another doorway on the right. He peeked into the room on the right. It was a bedroom very similar to his own. Carl closed his eyes and envisioned the two rooms. He rapidly calculated their dimensions and knew instantly that there had to be another room lying beyond that tapestry. He cautiously drew back the hanging. His heart beat faster. There was a door. He turned the handle; it was locked. Curiosity enticed him. Another enigma added itself to his list of perplexities. He smoothed the tapestry back in place and tapped his right foot. It was a bad habit he had acquired while working in the lab. Baffled, he turned abruptly and stalked to his room, determined to decipher the mysteries infesting the unnatural house.

He entered to find Jake lounging in a green brocade chair, a pair of aqua pajamas neatly folded over the armrest. The older man had been reading a book, but he closed it and looked up questioningly at the sound of Carl's footsteps.

"Where have you been? I brought you some sleeping garments but found you gone. I thought for a moment that you had left just as suddenly as you had appeared."

"No, not quite. I just went downstairs to water Rufus." Carl perched his body on the foot of the bed. "Jake, on my way back I stopped to admire some of your paintings in the hall. I happened to notice a tapestry, the one of the hounds flushing pheasant, and there's something odd about it." He looked Jake in the eye. "I discovered a door behind it. I have to admit that strange feelings have been plaguing me ever since I walked in your front door. And I don't like it, not at all. There's something funny going on in this house, and instinct tells me that that room has something to do with it." He glared intently at Jake, demand for an explanation glittered in the brown depths of his wide, fright-ridden eyes.

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Jake pursed his lips and tightened his grip on the book. A deep furror creased his brow. "That's a long, painful story," he said in a hushed, solemn voice. "Not one person, aside from myself, of course, knows the complete story. I can understand your curiosity, young man. I know I would feel the same if I were in your position." Leaning forward in his chair with an earnest, imploring expression, Jake continued, "I've carried this wearisome burden alone for years. It seems as though fate has brought you here tonight. I feel compelled to confide in you. You're a stranger to these parts. If I divulge my secret to you, you must promise that you will also keep it a secret. Will you take this oath?" Carl nodded a quick affirmative.

Sighing laboriously, Jake began, "My great-grandparents left Germany in the mid 1800's. They were among the first pioneers to settle Saskatchewan. My Great-Grandfather Herman came from a wealthy family. He was adventurous, like you. In 1860 he built the first bank in Nipawin. A year later he built this house and started a family. They had two children, Helen and Robert. The room you found belonged to Helen. She was an unusual girl. No, I think bizarre is a better word. She was a loner and rarely talked to anyone. The family knew she was an odd child, but they loved her regardless. Anyway, after she turned twelve, things got worse. She began to make ghostly predictions. And they always happened precisely as she foretold. You can imagine how people felt. Her classmates avoided her; they had never paid much attention to her in the first place. Eventually her parents withdrew her from school. You see, Helen predicted terrible disasters. This upset the townspeople and her family was afraid they would try to institutionalize her.

As she grew older, her condition worsened. Her family couldn't communicate with her. She spoke only when she had a vision, and she seemed to derive great satisfaction from relating these sad events. Finally they confined her to her room and kept the door locked at all times. They had grown deathly afraid of her.

She became ill in 1880; she was 17 at the time. The doctor had no idea what the disease was, but he knew that death was near. A member of the family was with her constantly. They did what they could for her, even though it proved fruitless. Her final words were terrifying. She vowed that if any person ever entered her room, he would be cursed to live in the hell that had been hers all of her life. No one knew how to interpret this, so after her death the room was locked up and the key was thrown in the river."

Jake paused, giving Carl a sad look. "No one has entered since."

A clock chimed the hour of eleven. Its echoes floated through the silent house, arousing the men back to the present.

Carl shook his head in amazement. "Jake, what kind of things did she predict? Do you have any valid proof that any of this really happened?"

Jake rubbed his hands over his face and cleared his throat. "It's true, Carl. My Great-Grandfather kept a very accurate journal on his daughter. I checked her predictions from the journal with the events documented in the library's old newspapers. Everything coincides. Also my Grandfather Robert told me everything he remembered about his sister. There is no question of validity. It all happened, of this I am certain. I'm currently in the process of researching psychic incidents with the hopes of reaching an understanding of Helen. It's all very complex, and as of now, I have made no leeway. Her predictions? They were hideous. She predicted, in vivid detail, the deaths of many people. My grandfather said it was horrible, especially Helen's attitude about the entire matter. She truly enjoyed her foresights."

Flustered, Jake rose from his chair. "I'll show you the journal in the morning. You can judge for yourself. For now I think it would be best if we retired." He shuffled to the door. "I hope my story doesn't affect your sleep. I'll see you in the morning." He was gone before Carl could question him further.

Carl's foot began its incessant tapping. He sat alone in his room, pondering the peculiar story. Could it be plausible? He had never paid much attention to psychic phenomena; he had always considered them a bit too abstract from every day life. Maybe Jake's isolation had affected his mind. He certainly was a strange man. But then, being a writer, his enthusiasm for his work could have induced him to fabricate a colorful family tree. Lord knows, Carl thought, everyone has his hangups. Yawning, he undressed and put on Jake's pajamas. He turned off the lights and crawled into the cold bed.

But sleep proved to be elusive. Carl tossed and turned. Though physically fatigued, his mind still dwelled on Helen's room. Exasperated, he switched on the bedside lamp. He knew he could not get any rest until his curiosity was satisfied. He had to inspect the forbidden room. Jake had said the key had been thrown in the river, so he would have to break into the room. That would be simple enough, the lock was more than a hundred years old. All he needed was a sturdy piece of wire. He'd quietly get in the room, inspect its contents, and then, he hoped, he could get some rest.

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He put on his socks and doused the light before opening the door. Without making a sound, he crept down the stairs and felt his way along the walls to the kitchen. He turned on the lights and began his search for the wire. If Jake caught him, he would explain that he hadn't been able to sleep, so he had come to the kitchen for a warm glass of milk. He hoped that wouldn't happen. It was bad enough going in the room behind Jake's back, let alone having to lie to him. He found a piece of electrical wire in a drawer filled with odds and ends. There was a flashlight, too. He picked it up and turned it on. The batteries were good. He would need it because the room had been closed up long before the house had been electrically equipped. Satisfied with his plunder, he silently groped his way through the still house to the tapestry-covered door.

Steadying his nerves, Carl drew back the tapestry. He slid in between the door and tapestry, closing both sides of the wallhanging around him to block the beam of the flashlight from the hall. He inserted the wire into the keyhole and gave it a hard, sharp turn to the left. The doorknob turned freely in his hand. He slowly opened the door, grimacing as the hinges squeaked in protest. He edged himself in the room, easing the door to a close behind him. He had made it.

Carl flashed the light around the room. It was filled with dust and cobwebs. He choked back a cough; the air was musty and hard to breathe. His eyes darted around the age-encrusted room and landed on a portrait centered above a bed. It was a full length painting of a girl. It had to be Helen. Carl walked over to the foot of the bed to get a better look at it. His pulse quickened as he looked into the painted eyes of the girl. They seemed to be alive, and glared back at him with an intense animosity. Carl shivered. The artist surely had talent. It was the most lifelike painting he had ever seen. Helen was seated in a black velvet Victorian chair, her hands placed sedately on a book in her lap. She couldn't have been more than 11 years old, the painting must have been done before her outbreak of predictions. She wore a green palid dress with a white ribbon around the waist. Her hair was long, a dull, muddy brown, framing an exceptionally long, thin face. But the eyes, they were a piercing green, emanated overpowering resentment.

His eyes dropped to the bed where she had died. He could imagine her at the moment of death, her eyes glowing with feverish hatred as she cursed anyone who dared to enter her room. Carl felt uncontrollable fear as he stared again at her portrait.

He could feel her presence in the room. Without realizing it, he began backing away from the bed, his eyes hypnotically glued on the face of the long-dead girl. He bumped into a dresser, sending a hand mirror crashing to the hardwood floor. Startled, he dropped the flashlight and wire. The flashlight splintered shards of glass. Its low beam cast eerie shadows of straggly cobwebs across the portrait. The picture appeared shattered...smashed like the dainty hand mirror. Cracked like the fractured nerves coursing his quaking body. He knew Jake's story was true. The phantomlike reality of Helen saturated the room. His pores were permeated with its existence. His mind was imbued with its horrible essence. Carl staggered blindly from the afflicted room.

Unaware of his surroundings, Carl returned to his room and collapsed on the disheveled bed. Unrestrained fear wavered along the taunt fibers of his agitated brain. He had to escape from this hell-born nightmare. Mustering energy, he shakily exchanged his pajamas for the warm, wool shirt and creased levis Jake had lended him. With trembling hands he grabbed a heavy, pewter candlestick from the desk and hugged it protectively to his breast. He hastily left the room, oblivious to the burning light and strewn bedclothes.

As he stumbled past the tapestry-shrouded hell, a fresh wave of dread engulfed him. He could feel the rays of Helen's hatred enfold him. Reason abandoned him. Lost in lunacy, he raced for the stairs. His foot twisted on the second step. He lost his balance and tumbled head first down the curving oak staircase. He landed face down, his arms embracing the cold parquet tiles of the dark hall. The candlestick followed in his wake. It struck his pale brow and rolled to a rest inches away from his outstretched hand. His head lulled at an unnatural angle. Burgandy blood trenched tiny rivulets down his putty white, lifeless face.

PART II

Ten years passed. The Waldendorf estate continued to possess its ageless beauty. The people of Nipawin still whispered about the strange death of the young student from the States, but fresher gossip on their tongues was the death of Jake Waldendorf. He had died of a heart attack in the winter, leaving his estate in the hands of Nipawin's Historical Society. Since the arrival of spring, the board of trustees had opened the house as a museum. The house was one of the oldest in the Territory, and considered to be a noteworthy landmark.

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Paul Lanley, a retired bookkeeper, was appointed caretaker and guide of the grounds. He lived in the house and was responsible for opening it every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for public viewing. He and Jake had been distant acquaintances. He had always respected Jake's talents and quiet manner, even though he seemed odd at times. He also loved the house with fervor, exulting whenever a visitor praised its handsome antiquity. The house was secluded, miles separated it from any neighbors, so it attracted only the serious trade of historical seekers.

It was a Monday afternoon and Paul was just ushering the last group of tourists out the door. It had been a slow day. Untired by the languid day, he decided to plan Tuesday's work schedule before preparing dinner. Every Tuesday he tackled a specific room and shampooed the carpet. He had completed the first floor last week, so he would begin upstairs the following day. He lumbered up the stairs and switched on the hall light. He surveyed the carpet and estimated the amount of work it would require. Eying the hunting hounds tapestry, he decided a good scrubbing might help it. A shampoo would highlight its rich tones and attract the eye. As a matter of fact, he'd do it tonight and save himself some free time for tomorrow.

He fetched a footstool from a nearby bedroom and hoisted himself up to the hooks securing the hanging to the top of the wall. Disengaging them, he carefully stepped to the floor. The old man gasped. There was a door behind the tapestry! He draped the tapestry over the handrail and hurried back to the door. He turned the doorknob and found it unlocked. Excitement bubbled up within him. His hands trembled as he cautiously pushed the door open. His eyes watered from the acrid air streaming from the room.

Slowly breathing the repugnant air, he began his tour of the room. It was very similar to the other bedrooms, but the layers of dust and streaming cobwebs were proof that it had not been occupied for a very long time. His toe kicked an object, sending it rolling across the floor. He bent down, squinting his eyes at the broken glass and rusty flashlight. He was not the first to explore the concealed room. He straightened his frail body and leaned on the dust-coated dresser. The tepid, dry air bothered his lungs. His eyes focused on the portrait staring at him from the dresser mirror's reflection.

He shuffled to the foot of the bed, distress clouding his parchment-like face. There was something obscenely wrong with the picture. He fumbled in his breast pocket for his spectacles. With shaking hands, he put them on to see the painting more clearly. His eyes widened in disbelief. "The artist must have been insane, he thought, as a quiver of fear shot through his body. He gently patted the beads of sweat forming on his brow.

The young man in the portrait returned Paul's fearful scrutiny. The face was frozen in a mask of terror. It expressed a horror Paul had never witnessed before. Though the young man's face was grotesque, his body rested serenely in a black velvet chair. He was dressed in a wool shirt and levis.

Paul scratched his head. None of the elements in the painting combined to make a balanced composition. Who in their right mind would pose for an oil with such a tormented expression? The painting seemed oddly familiar. His mind flipped back through the years gone by. Then it dawned on him. This was the young man who had died ten years ago! He remembered the face from the newspaper account of the tragedy. But the existence of the painting was impossible!

Paul's attention returned to the portrait. It was the essence of evil, it permeated the room. He knew that once he left the room, it would follow and invade the entire house with its ungodliness. He had to destroy it.

He packed his sparse belongings and stored them in his car. He took the half-filled gasoline can from the garage and returned to the hidden room.

He splashed the gasoline on the dusty drapes, grimacing as he struck the match. He hesitated, his eyes wandering to the portrait. Feeling justified, he tossed the lit match on the gas-dampened curtains. The flames quickly climbed the dry, rotted fabric.

Certain that the strengthening fire would consume the house, Paul hastened to the door. It wouldn't open. He pummelled his aged, fragile body against the sturdy oak door. He twisted the brass doorknob until the perspiration on his hands rendered his grip useless. The room was thick with smoke. It filled his lungs. Paul groped his way toward the blazing windows, determined to plunge to cool grass below them. He never made it. He collapsed in the middle of the room, unconscious and defeated.

PART III

The Tuesday morning sun cast a glare on the windshield of the tan, four door Datsun as it weaved along the winding driveway of the Waldendorf estate. The driver, a middle-aged, sharp featured woman, swore softly as she rummaged through her purse in a search for her sun

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glasses. Her three companions shrieked as the car veered to the shoulder of the narrow, gravelled road. Thelma jerked the steering wheel back on course and adjusted her glasses. She shifted to a low gear as the car ascended a steep hill. The women gasped in dismay when they reached the top. A smouldering patch of rubble awaited them at the end of the lane.

Thelma drove into the clearing and parked the Datsun a safe distance from the smoking remains of the house. The four women deserted the car and walked to the site. Clad in hiking boots in anticipation of trekking the wooded estate, they stomped through the coals carpeting the foundation remnants. They poked through the burnt debris in an attempt to identify the ashen remains of the glories depicted in their brochures.

Carolyn, the youngest of the foursome, wandered from the others. She kicked the refuse from her path, angry at the destruction surrounding her. Suddenly her eyes widened in disbelief. Her piercing scream brought her friends to her side. The four women stared in horror at the singed portrait lying at their feet. The face of a terrified old man returned their gaze.

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JUDY BELFIELD

A silver and gold ring
brushed soft skin in a passionate moment.
Months later,
the nervous ring-wrapped finger
relaxed
when it touched the squalling, velvet surface of new flesh.
The new flesh
became older;
had known the ring's feel
through pats, slaps and handshakes.
The ring had chinked against countless beer glasses;
had tapped the windows of age;
had shone in the sunlight of summer ballgames
and concealed its heft in the furry gloves of winter.
Time --
time passes --
And makes its passing known
as it scars all those in its path;
weather-beaten days of wind, snow and rain;
lazy monotonous spans
of mechanical comings and goings
in the progression of a life.
The ring is removed
with delicacy and soap and patience
from the finger now swollen with disease --
and makes its way to a strange new home
on a familiar,
yet alien hand.

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PAT BOHLER

GEORGE'S $289.65 CHERRY PIE

George's trees were lovely that Spring. There were three of them in beautiful gowns of cotton white. The soft May breezes set them to dance and curtsey against the new green of the hillside, like maidens at a presentation ball. The enchanting, fragrant scene attracted bees by the hundreds. The air fairly buzzed with their exciting work for a week. When they finished and the blossoms faded and fell, the leaves grew and deepened in color to a glossy, dark green.

The first week in June George realized that all three trees were very pregnant with cherries. Anyway, that's how George put it. He was expecting a bumper crop of cherries sometime around the first of July.

All that George wanted to talk about that June was his trees and "fresh cherry pie from my very own trees." In fact, George, who was usually sought out for advice on how to get rid of crabgrass, dandelions and aphids, and on what variety of tomato, cabbage, green beens and onions to plant was suddenly avoided

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by the whole neighborhood because they just couldn't stand his harping about "fresh cherry pie from my very own trees."

As June drew to an end, the neighbors in spite of George's carping and I suspect their own jealousy began to inspect the trees when George wasn't looking. I caught Fred Carlson creeping through our yard one morning. He hid behind my lilac bush and peeked through the fence into George's yard at the trees. In fact, I know that was what he was doing because I had done the same thing myself just a few hours earlier.

The cherries were large, plump yellow with a pink plush on one side. That week the air seemed alive with the aroma of fresh baked cherry pie. At first I thought it was probably my imagination responding to the power of George's suggestion, but I soon realized that the reason was a simple one. Fred Carlson's wife set two pies out to cool on the picnic table on their patio the same afternoon after I saw Fred in the bushes. Everyone was baking cherry pies and I found it a temptation hard to resist. I made a "Thank You" brand cherry pie for dinner that evening. It didn't satisfy the way I had expected it to satisfy. It just wasn't "fresh from my very own trees."

Anyway, the next morning when I was washing windows in the guest bedroom upstairs, I saw George come out of his house and stand in front of his trees. Now, before you get the wrong idea, I'm not in the habit of spying on my neighbors. It just happened that when I removed the storm windows, pushed the top sash down, stood on the top step of the step stool and leaned out of the window several feet, I could if I wanted to look into George's back yard over the tops of the cherry trees. Like I said George was there inspecting the trees. The branches of the trees bent low under the weight of ripening fruit, much the same way a pregnant woman droops those last few weeks before giving birth. George even had the look of an expectant father. That "look and see what 've done"look. That "aren't I something" look. Yes, George was really pleased with himself. Soon he'd have "fresh cherry pie from his very own trees."

The following morning the neighborhood woke to what sounded like chinese gongs accompanied by an incessant chattering and squawking of birds. At our house my husband threw on a pair of pants over his pajamas and ran outside to see what was wrong. He reported over breakfast. "It was George. He was beating on an old metal dishpan with a large spoon and yelling 'the birds are after my cherries, the birds are after my cherries." My husband said the southernmost tree was a mass of wings. Hundreds of Starlings, Grackles and Blue Jays, who had stripped the tree of all cherries within an hour. They ate the cherries whole, half yellow, half red. It was the darndest thing anyone ever saw. George was beside himself with anger.

Later that afternoon I stopped by George's to see if I could cheer him. Most of the neighbors had the same idea because when I arrived they were grouped around the tree. Everyone was full of advice for saving the remaining two trees, one of which showed a pink blush on its fruit which surely made it the next target. George would have none of us or our ideas. He planned to beat the birds alone and have his cherry pie too. I suppose he reacted so stubbornly because of our behavior in those preceding weeks.

The following morning at the crack of dawn George was out there with his dishpan and spoon. Sleep was impossible. I went out to watch the battle across the fence. The birds were there alright. Hundreds of them. Starlings, Grackles and Blue Jays. The only difference in the behavior from the day before was that instead of eating the whole cherries, they only ate the pink side of each fruit, leaving the rest as waste. George, realizing that he was helpless against such unreasonable creatures called to his neighbors for help. "Your cats," he yelled. "Bring your cats."

Within a few minutes six cats had been thrown over the fence into George's yard. Even Fred Carlson donated his cat. The Blue Jays made short work of them. Five cats scurried for the protection of their houses, howling, rolling and hissing as the birds bombarded them. Fred's cat, however, took to George's willow tree, where he spent the remainder of the day in an insane combat with four very persistent Blue Jays. His caterwalling and the Jays squawking sent everyone indoors and the second tree was lost to the birds. At sundown I saw Fred's cat with fur standing on end, creep in a drunken dizzy path across our yard toward his home. He clung to the earth as if he was afraid he'd fall off. Every few steps, eyes frozen in terror, he would stop, shudder, then roll in the grass, howl, spin, then grab for the earth with his front paws and continue on his way.

The next morning we woke at our usual time, We ran to inspect the remaining tree. It looked like it was decorated for Christmas. Aluminum foil pans hung like ornaments from every branch. Stuffed and ceramic owls peeked through the branches. Over all was my Uncle's fishing net that I had stored for him in our garage, my husband's contribution. con't.

Also a garden hose ran from every house surrounding George's yard. A sprinkler was attached to each and the tree was encased in a storm of water. The birds weally were stumped. The Starlings were angry. They stomped and strutted around the yard circling the tree making those ugly awwk-clicking sounds that they make. The Grackles watchful and squawking lined every telephone and electric wire for two blocks in every direction. The Blue Jays hopped in and out of the branches of the taller trees and dive bombed every creature that moved. It was a scene from Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds;" for three whole days, but the tree seemed safe from them. George went to sleep the third evening knowing that he could pick the ripe fruit the following morning.

The neighborhood was out in force that morning to watch George pick his cherries.

The hoses were turned off. George came out of his house with an aluminum step ladder and a plastic bucket. He also had a wire hook to hang the bucket in the tree. He set the ladder on the slope under the tree and started to unwind the fishing net. As he walked around and around the tree the birds moved in. George pulled the net out into his yard and the birds attacked the tree. By the time George returned to the tree we couldn't believe what we saw. Besides the hundreds of birds there were five squirrels in the tree eating as fast as they could. On the ground under the tree were three rabbits eating the pits the squirrels spit out.

The creatures weren't to be scared away. George, ignoring them, climbed the ladder, hung his bucket on a branch, and started to pick cherries. The tree was a flurry of activity and only the squirrels stopped to schld him. He worked fast and in no time at all the bucket was full of plump red cherries. George reached for the hook just as one of the smaller squirrels decided to help himself to the cherries in the bucket. No one is sure, but maybe the squirrel surprised George by brushing against his hand. Maybe as George cleaned forward the front legs of the ladder sank deep into the soft wet ground, or maybe the fact that the ladder was on the hill-side, or it could have been a combination of all three things, but George's face turned to a mask of fear. The ladder started to fall toward the tree with George on the top rung. He frantically grasped for something to hold on to but there was only air. The cherries, squirrel, ladder and George crashed hands first through the branches to the ground. We heard a loud "crack" over the sounds of the metal ladder as it crumpled, the scolding squirrels, the scream of the rabbits, the thump of the bucket, and the flapping of the bird's wings as the whole flock took flight. George yelled in pain.

My husband and Fred Carlson reached George first. By the time I got there George was saying over and over, "the cherries, get the cherries." The bucket had landed on its bottom and every cherry was still in the bucket. I grabbed the bucket and showed George that it was safe. George passed out. Some say the pain got to him, but I know it was from relief that the cherries were safe. Anyway, George's wife took the cherries into the house on her way to phone for an ambulance. George had two broken wrists.

That evening my husband and I went to visit George. He was laying on the couch in the living-room, both arms upright in casts. His wife was feeding him his dinner. "Hey, you're just in time for dessert and coffee," he grinned.

George's wife excused herself and George explained why he was in such good spirits. Since we live in an unincorporated area without ambulance service we have to pay for the service. It cost George $60 for the ambulance. The emergency room cost another $42. Doctor, x-rays, treatment, etc., cost another $112.35. Walgreen's charged George a dollar for the pain medication because George belongs to P.C.S. He would have to buy a new step ladder and could get one on sale at Coast to Coast for $26.35. He had bought 20 aluminum foil pans at Day and Nite for $23.35, and he figured that his five neighbors and himself would have an additional $23.46 on their water bills for those three days and nights. The cost of the whole escapade was $239.65, not to mention that Fred Carlson had to get the veterinarian to put his insane cat to death.

George's wife returned with coffee and cherry pie fresh from George's very own tree. As George took the first bite of pie, he closed his eyes,and savoring the flavor of the pie, he smiled. I could tell that the one bite was worth the price he paid. I couldn't eat mine, though. I remembered that cat too vividly.

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JUDY BELFIELD

THE SUN

The sun --
the ham --
took a grandiose bow an hour ago
and now sleeps in his dressing room
until the next performance.
He left his pinkpurple cape
flamboyantly unfurled center stage
on the horizon
and everyone in the audience
is speechlessly in awe:
Such skillful elocution;
such splendid gestures!
The house lights go up --
stars are being starched
into a crisp, midnight-blue sky
and the moon --
a pared, luminous fingernail
with needlesharp points
and thin as eyelid skin
croons a drawnout lovesong:
An extended finale.
And just now
the crash of applause
causes tremors in the walls
And Ol' Sun doesn't care that he misses it;
he's signed a contract
for an eternal run
and he'll be taking bows for a long time --
after all the audiences are gone.

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TOM DITSCH

WHAT MAKES JOHNNY RUN?

To anyone who drives a car in Joliet, it is quite evident that the running craze that has swept America hasn't passed by our area. Now, while avoiding children on their bikes and dogs that run loose, area drivers can also attempt to swerve out of the way of 50 year old men in sweat suits. Before shouting obsenities the next time a jogger takes liberties with the roadway, let us first examine the reasons they have for huffing and puffing through the streets every day.

The running craze seems to have appeared hand in hand with the disco craze, which turns people off to running by association. Anyone who thinks that disco dancers are passionnate in their love for disco would call anti-disco people downright fanatical. Many people, when they see a runner, assume that he or she is struggling for a pair of tight-fitting jeans rather than any physical or therapeutic benefit. It is true that vanity is a reason many runners carry along with them along the miles. However, these people are the minority. Removing these people from the total number of runners would be removing a very small percentage.

Also, many people associate the boom in running with the health food maniacs sprouting up all over the country. This, it is true, is a fair assumption. If you have ever been trapped at a party with some health food nut, you will be certain to get an account of the various herbs, sprouts, vitamins, and eventually, miles that are a big part of this person's life. Pay them no heed. These people are not runners, but are in fact people caught up in a fad that will come and go just as many others have.

Well, if these people aren't runners, then who is? What is the real motivation behind the pure-bred runner? The real runner is in fact an athlete. He is a person who enjoys challenging his body on a regular basis. These people will be here long after disco is just an ugly memory to the music industry. The Joliet area is blessed with many of these amateur athletes.

Why do they run? Let's get the answer from the horse's mouth. Mr Brian Larson: Mr. Larson began running in the fall of 1979. A former football player, Mr. Larson had let his weight balloon up to 215 pounds. He began running to lose weight, and found the effects of running pleasant. Today he weighs 170 and runs six miles daily. "I began running

con't.

primarily to lose weight," he said recently, "but I enjoyed it so much that I have continued. I feel much better because of it." Mr. Larson now regularly runs in local races. "It is very compatable with my life-style," he said.

Mr. Damon Zdunich: Mr. Zdunich was a former track runner in high school. Today he continues to make running a part of his day. When asked why he runs, he made the following remarks: "When I left high school, I quit running for a few months. I really began to feel low on energy and listless. Out of boredom, I began running again. Now that I don't have that competitive pressure on me, I really enjoy it. I feel better. I kind of look at it as my hobby."

This seems to be the prevalent motivation for runners -- it is a hobby. Instead of stopping off at the local watering hole after work, they rush home to get in a few miles. The benefits they derive from it are a welcome bonus. Perhaps the attitude of the amateur runner can best be summed up by noted runner/author Jim Fixx. On a recent TV interview, Fixx revealed: "Running hasn't changed my life, but it has helped make what I have more enjoyable. Many runners would agree with this statement.

So the next time you are disturbed by the sight of a sweating, gasping jogger on our city streets, think twice before discounting him as a fly by night faddist. He's not trying to prove he's better than the rest of humanity; he's just trying to improve his little piece of it.

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LIL LONGSHORE

THE BELLRINGER'S BECKONING

From tower bells
came innocent yells
tallying up the score.
The night wind blew
for all who knew
the town would be empty no more.

The town had grown deserted. The laughter that was once there was only an echo down the dim cobwebbed hall. The moth-eaten sasack cloth hanging at the windows waved slowly in the late afternoon breeze. No one was there. No human one. It seemed such a void. No one had come in such a long time. It would be so nice to have people around again. Maybe with a little help they would come.....soon.

The road led down the back side of the old mission village. The afternoon drive was really quite nice, Meg thought. It was a shame not to get out more often on days like this. The cinema hadn't been crowded at all. She was glad Mary had asked her to go early. Night time was always so risky. With the way people were these days, you couldn't take any chances.

The ride was only a short one and soon she found herself turning into her driveway. The bushed lane smelled of the fragrance of the lilacs that were bloomed. The yard always had the appearance of being tailored. No grass was out of place. All the flowers were arranged in a rainbow across her lawn. She pulled into the garage and carried her few purchases from Miller's Department store into the kitchen. It was still late afternoon and she still had time to do some cleaning before supper. Yes, that's what she liked. A well-accomplished day.

She went to the front porch to see if the paper had arrived. There was time to catch up on what was happening in the world, at least for a few minutes. The Carmel Banner caught her eye with the article that appeared in the lower section of the front page.

"Well into the end of the second month and still no evidence has been found relating to the mysterious killings of our local citizens. Unexplained circumstances remain a puzzle to authorities concerning events prior to their deaths."

She shuddered as she finished reading. Strange, to think this was going on right under our very noses! Well, that was enouth of that! She got up and made sure the door chain had been hooked and the lock was bolted. You can't take chances, she thought.

As she got the vacumm from the hallway closet, she stopped to smooth her hair in the full length mirror. She didn't mind what she saw. For her 43 years, she felt that she was still an attractive woman. She had kept a moderate figure, no children had kept her tummy from being flabby. Her hair was still a natural brown, not yet adding grey. Living alone had some disadvantages, but on the whole, she was satisfied with her life.

She finished with the dining room floor and was down the hall when she started to hear the ringing. It must be the phone. She stopped to answer it but

con't.

there was nothing. Oh, well, she thought, it must be my imagination! She started the motor once more but within a minute the ring was back again. Now, that has to be it. She repeated what she had done before. Again, nothing.

She began to feel tense. Starting for the third time, she threw the cord to the machine around her shoulder so she could move more freely. The ringing began again. This is crazy! Bending to shut the machine off, she felt the cord tighten around her throat. The fear tasted strange in her mouth. Dreaded and deadly. The adrenalin pumped wildly through her head. She could hear her temples pulsing loudly. Her hands tugged feverishly at the snake-like cord. Struggling to get free had her soon gasping for air. She managed to free herself and collapsed in the chair. She knew how it had happened. But..... somehow, it had almost seemed deliberate.

She went to the kitchen for a drink. Chiding herself as she sipped the brandy, "I have to get a hold on myself. Now I think I'm hearing things too! All of this is ridiculous! The house is the same as it has always been. I must be tired. A hot shower will stop this foolishness."

Yes, a shower. The work would wait. She finished her drink and went up to undress for the sultry waves that could calm her body down. As she creamed her face, taking off the day's make-up, she thought of the movie they had seen. That hadn't helped her mood any. It had been one of those "R" rated thrillers that a movie buff couldn't resist. It had done the trick. She had been frozen in her seat through half the movie. No medals in bravery had ever come her way before, and she wasn't about to start getting them now.

She climbed into the shower, letting the little needles penetrate her skin. It always felt so good! She loved the luxury of standing under the indoor waterfall and saturating her body. As she stood there the shower suddenly seemed hotter. At first she let out a gasp for the start that it gave her. She tried adjusting the nozzles, but the water kept pouring out the same. She saw the steam starting to build in the stall and her body was fighting for air. She had to get out. She gave a sharp tug but the door hadn't moved. Instead, she fell to the floor. She felt heat hitting her face, driving her down like someone trying to smother her. Struggling to pull herself up the sides of the tub, the pounding force kept her down. Screaming came from the shallows of her throat. Foolish. No one would hear. She tried again to get up. This time she managed to reach the handle on the door and pull all the way up. She fought the door fiercely. Finally, she was able to slide it free and climbed out.

Falling to the floor she lay exhausted trying to absorb what had happened. Then she began to cry. Something was wrong, terribly wrong, but what. Her body ached from scalding on her stomach and face. She wasn't sure how long she lay crying. She needed rest. She would get something to help her sleep. To help her think.

Meg went to her bedroom and slipped into a negligee that was hanging on the back of the door. Glancing out the window, she saw it was dusk. Somehow, the darkness right now seemed safer than it was inside. Meg thought of calling someone to come over. But what would she tell them? The vacuum attacked her? Or maybe that the shower had tried to drown her? She let out a nervous laugh. Even that sounded insane to her! How could she tell anyone else? It would be best to get some sleep and maybe by morning things would be better.

Down in the kitchen Meg ran the water for a kettle of tea and put it on to boil. She had to admit that she was starting to feel better already. She reached into the drawer for a spoon and felt the blade rip into her hand. She let out a gasp of pain. Then a loud, chilling shriek. It was impossible. Her knives had never been in the drawer before. Special care had been taken to prevent just this sort of thing from happening. But the blood trickling down her arm told her someone had to have done it. If it wasn't her, what was going on?

She had to get back upstairs to get something to stop the bleeding. She grabbed the kitchen towel, stopped to turn the kettle off, and made her way upstairs to the bathroom. Meg made sure to close the door behind her. It had always been a habit of hers, but now it lent an air of safeness in all this maddness. The cut was bleeding so hard that it became impossible to even clean it. Her blood formed kaleidoscope designs in the sink. There was nothing left for her to do. Stitches would be needed now for the bleeding to stop. She reached for the door. It didn't open. Beads of perspiration swelled up on her forehead. She pounded on it futilely. Meg slumped to the floor, cowering in the corner. The awareness pierced her brain as sharply as the knife had her hand. She was not alone. She forgot about holding the palm of her hand. Right now, more than anything, she needed to get out of there. If she could just get out she was sure that she would be alright. She caught sight of herself in the mirror, not recognizing herself at first. The long-ago child who had been afraid of the dark stared back at her. The tension had started to show in the cracks of her skin. She looked like she had seen a ghost. She laughed with the sound of panic in her voice. Ironic, maybe she hadn't seen a ghost.....yet. con't.

There was nothing to use in the bathroom to pry the door open. The only thing that had been in the medicine cabinet had been a pack of razor blades. What good would that do? She grabbed a washcloth to wrap around her hand while trying the door again. It opened. Just like that. She stepped back, hesitant at first. Meg took a deep breath and started running down the hallway. She felt herself growing weak. She knew she was losing too much blood. She got the car keys off the kitchen counter, leaving her purse behind. She left in only her negligee and bare feet.

The engine started slowly; too slow for her. She took another deep breath. Soon, this awakened nightmare would be over. She would get help. Yes, she could get Mary to go with her to the hospital and spend the night at her house. She needed time to think. Time to separate the real from the imaginary..... Backing out of her drive, she headed for the outskirts of town. The evening had drawn silhouettes on the sky in the form of blue-black clouds. The moon was not offering any guidance to travelers hiding behind the dark shapes. She had to keep her mind on what she needed to do first. Mary could get her some clothes and a drink. Before she did anything else, she needed to pull herself back together. The road seemed to have more than the usual curves tonight. Funny how you take things for granted when you see them all the time. The old mission could be seen in the distance on the edge of town. It stood like a silent soldier, well over 150 years old.

Something caught her attention in the rear view mirror. What had it been? Something darting across the road after she had passed? She began to feel the tension mounting in her again. She sped up, going faster than she usually dared. But this was different. She had to get to Mary's. She glanced nervously again in the mirror. The blood from her hand had saturated the towel and was leaving a pool of blood in her lap. She didn't care. Right now, the most important thing was to get as far away as possible. Fast.

Then she felt it. It was like a fingernail going up the back of her spine. The chills announcing their arrival on her skin sent her whole system tingling. The base of her neck, now taut, felt the pressure of something.....someone touching. Oh, my God! Now it was there with her in the car! What ever it was, it was in the back seat with her. As she forced her eyes to the mirror, her mouth opened to scream. But no sound came out.

The eyes were glowing white with a burst of rays spraying around them. The aura of red seemed to dance around its head. The shape of what she thought to be the face loomed large and black. Now it was growing bigger and bigger and closing in on her. She began choking on the panic that had lodged in her throat. Her hands were slippery with the blood and sweat mixture making the wheel hard to control. She fought for consciousness against the terror and heat. She felt the crushing pressure in her chest. Meg hadn't seen the tree at all. The blackness had already closed in on her.

The police car pulled up behind her car. The accident hadn't been that bad, but the car had hit the tree pretty hard, from the look of things. Her body lay slumped half way out of the car.

"There's no identification, Mike," the first officer yelled. "From the looks of things in here she must have been cut up pretty bad. Funny,though, not from the wreck. What'd ya think?"

"Can't figure it out. She looks sane enough. But did you see the burns on her face? And there's blood all down the front of her. She was taking those curves like a maniac back there. He must have chased her for the last three miles. Odd, a woman like her...you'd think she'd of stopped. We could a got her to the hospital a hell of a lot quicker...alive."

In the distance, the mission tower stood guard. A lone bell seemed to chime. But that was impossible. The town had been empty for who knows how long. Who knows.

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LIL LONGSHORE

THE RIDDLE

I'm 5'6" inches in height
Having blonde hair and hazel eyes.
My weight is more than ample;
Yet still not oversized.
Who am I?
I'm known as being amiable
That's the impression I try to make;
I'm covered with chameleon skin,
To protect me from those I can't take.
What am I?
I'm seen in all types of places.
Not one path do I follow straight-away;
The one that is hardest to see me on,
Is the one that leads to today.
Where am I?
Your final clue is close at hand;
I'm real - I hurt and I care:
Give up? Please, no, don't quit.
I need you to find me somewhere.

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DEBBIE GIBSON

SANDS OF TIME

"If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear."
-W. Shakespeare

He awoke. Waves of heat warmed his back. The lappings of a strong tide lulled his exhausted senses. The soft, fine sand contouring his body signalled the first warning. Something was wrong. He rolled over and blinked as bright rays of sunlight attacked his swollen, sleep-riden eyes. An endless, blue sea faced him. Where was he? Who was he? The shimmering waters offered no answer.

Turning his back on the sea, he surveyed his strange surroundings. He stood, alone, on a long, white beach. No other living creatures habitated the bleached shoreline. It stretched about a hundred yards and then blossomed into a lush, tropical forest.

Shedding his waterlogged loafers, he started down the deserted coast. He had walked over a mile without finding a change in scenery before he spotted a brown object on the sands ahead. He broke into a run, and then dropped in defeat. They were his shoes.

The glaring noon sun led him to the shaded relief of the trees. Like the beach, the foliage sustained no wildlife. No insects infiltrated the vibrant expanse of greenery. Drained, he made a bed beneath their screens and slept.

A tightening pressure on his chest woke him. He started screaming when he saw the vines creeping over his arms and legs. Their tendrils curled over one another, binding him to the earth. Chlorophyll chains covered his torso. With every scream, their grip increased. The vines quickly spread. Within minutes, no screams erupted from the mound of tropical ivy.

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The man awakened from his dream clutching the armrest of his seat. The woman in the seat next to him gave him a wary glance before poking her head between the pages of her open newspaper. Shaken by the nightmare, he motioned to a flight attendant and ordered a double black Russian. He eased back, stretched his legs, and stared out the tiny, oval window. The ocean remained a monotonous blue as the 747 soared through the wispy clouds.

He checked his watch. He had two hours to kill before landing in Paris. He sipped the strong drink while he rechecked the agenda for his business trip. His briefcase slipped from his knees as the jet engines sputtered. Screams filled the cabin as the plane nosedived to the ocean below. With his body pressed to the cabin wall, the man stared in horror at the tiny, tropical island framing his porthole window.

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JUDY BELFIELD

I'M PLANNING EVERY MINUTE

I'm planning every minute of my days
so they are crammed with activity
and I am unable to think of you.
I'm keeping myself in fun-loving company;
they help me to laugh
and continue laughing --
because when I stop
you'll grab me
and I'll never get back.
You are not quite the same as I remember --
Your heart seems blacker than I've ever known
and you make me so afraid
as your slowly inching feet come near.
I know I cannot elude you forever
but please --
don't touch me today!

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LIL LONGSHORE

TO YOUR MARRIAGE

Many happy returns. I don't need the pain,
the memory; the nothingness of it all.
How can I be sad now?
It's too late for any of it. I had to let go.
You - like a drowning victim pulling me down.
I, too, would die. Time, a woodpecker, chipping
Piece by piece.

And now I find you've changed.
Not as I remember, hardly at all.
A quirk-smile across my face recalls a time long before.
Adrenalin streams wilder thru my shaking veins.
As I cross the cavern of time. Then, yes.
We were different. Seemingly unique.

But, return to the present.
I said goodbye today. It only took a minute.
For words to form after years from first we met.
It's over. It wasn't worth getting mad at.
The monster had faded.
The god dispersed.
Man remained. Reduced from a high place.

The back of my hand will wipe the tear from my face.
But what do I use on my heart?

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DIANE YUNKER

THE LIFE SENTENCE

The sun shone brightly through the tied-back curtains swaying in the morning breeze. Opening my eyes I realized it was morning and sighed. Glancing over to the nightstand beside my bed, I saw the digital lights read 7:15. I pulled the covers over my head, wishing it was still night time - better yet, weeks before. I had dreaded this morning for so long and here it was. I wondered if things would ever be the same again. I had just adjusted to this new way of life, and now I was in for another change. Being an only child, my Mother had died when I was just a small girl. My father had assumed a dual parent role, and I admired and respected him for it. He worked for the railroad, and we lived comfortably in a ranch style house in a small town. Things seemed to be going well, or at least I had thought so. Sure, I knew Dad drank beer, but I didn't realize how heavily until it was too late. I would never forget that horrible night when I was awakened from a sound sleep by the persistent ringing of the phone. "Mary...It's Dad. Are you awake?"...The words seemed slurred. "Yes, Dad"..I replied, half incoherently, my eyes still closed.

"Mary...listen, I've had a little accident," the voice came back over the phone.

Accident! The word rang through my head, suddenly making me wide awake. "What is it, Daddy? Are you hurt? Where are you?" I asked, emphatically.

"Calm down, baby. I'm fine. There's just a little trouble, that's all. I'm down here at the uh...New Richnell police station."

I knew then that he had been drinking. The town was New Richmond, where he worked. I was almost afraid to ask any more questions, but managed to get out the words "what happened?"

"Can you come down here, honey? I'd rather talk to you in person." His voice seemed to straighten up somewhat.

After agreeing to come right down, I hung up the phone, thinking of all the things he could have done to be in jail. Drunken driving? A fight? I was glad I had cashed my paycheck that evening so I'd have bail money. If only things had been so simple. The rest of the night I had to keep reminding myself I really was awake. It wasn't a nightmare. There was an argument over a pool game, and the details were grim, but ended with a man on the floor, a knife wound to his abdomen. That same man's blood now was stained on the blade of my father's fishing knife, now contained in a bag marked evidence on the table. I prayed for the man to live. I couldn't bear my father to be thought of as a murderer. My prayers were answered by a phone call to the hospital. The man was in stable condition. It was only the beginning,

con't.

however. He stayed in jail until his court date, and was sentenced for attempted manslaughter. I cringed as the judge read his future. 25 years in the state penitentiary, eligible for parole in five. I remember thinking, 25 years! I'd be 45 when he got out of jail. He was only 40 himself then. It was tearful and painful to see his head hung low, his wrists cuffed together, being hauled off for who knew how long.

Going to visit him at first was torture. Looking at him through that window, the shame was visible in his eyes. Being only able to talk over a phone, I tried to keep the conversation as cheerful and encouraging as possible. I cried all the way home each time. The visits got fewer and fewer, and I had only seen him three times in the past year. Here it was seven years later, and he was coming home.

Throwing the covers back from my body, I trudged slowly to the bathroom, turning on the shower. I stood under the spray, letting the water trickle down my body, my mind a maze of thoughts. This had been my house for all these years, and now I'd have to share it with an almost stranger. Climbing out of the shower, I dried myself off and dressed in a brown tweed blazer and skirt outfit. After drying my hair and putting electric rollers in it, I walked into the kitchen to make some breakfast. My last morning alone. At first I had yearned for the day when my dad would come home, but now the day was here and I was so skeptical. Maybe I should get my own place, I thought to myself, pouring a glass of orange juice. I wasn't very hungry so I walked back into the bedroom and took the curlers out of my hair. I brushed the curls out and stood back, realizing I had really matured both physically and mentally since he had been gone. I had been told more than once that I resembled my mother in many ways, and I felt proud of that. My light brown hair draped lightly on my shoulders, framing my light complexion, and I had a petite build just as my mother did. I realized that I was going quite slow, actually I think I was stalling, the red lights now read 8:45, and I knew I had to leave soon. His last letter I had received a few weeks back had announced the final day:

> Mary,
>
> I hope things are going well for you. I'm getting released April 14. Please pick me up at 10:00. We have a lot of catching up to do.
>
> Dad

His letters seemed to be getting so much more impersonal, and I almost detected sarcasm in this one. I'm sure he was hurt that I hadn't visited him in so long, but it was so painful. I knew at last I had to be leaving, so I got my jacket and headed out to my car. It was an hour's drive through the country, but the ride went very quickly. Soon I came upon the sign "State Penitentiary." Driving up the path, I came to a stop at the closed black iron gates. After telling the guard who I was, he called to verify my arrival. Moments later, the gates opened, and I continued to drive up to a large brick building. The only other time I had been in this particular building seemed so long ago when my father first came here. I remember driving home that day in a complete daze, only able to think of my Dad as a convict. I parked my car and walked up the steps. Pulling the barred-door open, I walked inside. A prim, stern-looking woman sat behind a desk to my right.

"What can I do for you?" the woman asked, not looking up from what she was reading.

"I'm here to pick up my fa...uh..... Richard Miller. He's to be released today." I replied, annoyed at her disinterest.

"His number?" the woman asked, looking up over her half-glasses.

I fumbled through my purse for the card.I had written it on so long ago. Pulling it out, I read "367346."

The woman looked through a file by her desk, and pulled out some papers. She got up and walked down an aisle, and disappeared from sight. I wondered if she expected me to follow her, but I figured she would have told me to do so if she wanted me to. A few minutes later, she reappeared, a grey-haired man dressed in a crisp uniform following her.

"Miss Miller?" the man questioned from across the room.

I nodded my head yes, and he beckoned me to follow him. We walked down a long hall and up a flight of stairs. He unlocked a door and I followed him in a small office.

"Sit down, please. Your father will be brought up shortly. Just a few formalities and you'll be on your way." The man began to thumb through the papers the woman had given him. Just then I heard footsteps coming up the stairs. I turned around, and there he was. Not dressed in those same grey dungarees I had grown accustomed to seeing him in, but in a tan shirt neatly tucked into a brown pair of pants. His hair had greyed quite a bit, and he seemed slimmer than I remembered him to be.

"Mary!" He walked across the room, his arms out, and I got up and we embraced. I could see tears welling in his eyes.

"Sit down, Richard, and we'll take care of this paperwork, and at long last you will be on your way home." After signing numerous sheets, the man told him he would be on probation for some time,

con't.

to stay out of trouble, then a firm handshake ended his seemingly-eternal sentence. We walked down the stairs, through that office, past the prim woman, and out the door. A cool breeze blew through the trees. There was an uneasy silence because I didn't know what to say to him.

Dad finally broke the silence. "Mary, there's so much time between us. We've got so much catching up to do. You've grown into quite a beautiful woman," he said, as I unlocked my Mustang.

"Thank you. You look quite good yourself," I replied. I felt uneasy of the fact this "stranger" thought of me as a beautiful woman, not his little girl. I searched for words to keep the conversation going. "Are you hungry? How about some breakfast?"

"Sounds great. I haven't had a decent meal in quite some time," he said, with a laugh in his voice. We drove back up that country road, keeping light conversation. It seemed forever until finally I saw the familiar Golden Bear sign. After parking the car we walked inside. The waitress seated us and I pretended to be pondering over what to order.

"Mary...I know this is going to be tough, trying to make up the lost time, but please, at least let me try," Dad said in a pleading voice.

"Of course, it will be hard. It will take some time," I said, reaching across the table taking Dad's hand in mine. The way he caressed my finger made me feel funny, so after a gentle squeeze I pulled my hand back. "Please, Dad, just promise me one thing. Give up your drinking. I don't want to have to worry about you." I had made up my mind to make him promise me this long ago.

"If it will make you happy, honey, sure," he compromised.

"Great, then things will work out fine, I'm sure. Hey, did I tell you I started a new job in January? I work as a cashier at Jewel. The pay is pretty good and I love the work."

"I'm glad to hear that. I'm sure you've had a pretty tough time keeping up the bills on your salary and the little savings I left for you. I'm gonna go down and talk to Jack at the railroad and see if I can get my old job back," he said, reassuringly.

I was skeptical of him getting that job back, because Jack was pretty upset about the whole incident. I had seen him since, and he didn't sound very sympathetic towards Dad. I decided to change the subject. "Do you remember me telling you about my boyfriend, Jim?"

"I think I remember hearing that name before," Dad answered casually.

"Well, we're planning on getting married next year. We've been going out for over a year now. He works for an accounting firm, and I met him when I..."

"Waitress, can you get our order, please?" Dad interrupted. I wondered why he didn't want to hear about Jim. The rest of the breakfast, I kept rather quiet, and didn't offer any further details of what I was up to. I was hurt by the way he didn't take an interest in the man I loved and planned to marry. We left the restaurant and drove the few blocks home. Dad's eyes lit up when I pulled the car in the drive. I hadn't even turned the car off, and he was already out the door and half way up the walk to the house.

"Oh, Mary. You have no idea how long I've waited for this moment. It's so great to be home and back in civilization again!" He turned his key in the lock and opened the door. Walking inside, he gazed around, refreshing his memory of the house. He looked around the living room and his eyes froze on the picture of my Mom on the mantle. He walked over to it and picked it up.

"Oh, Ann, honey, I'm sorry I screwed things up so bad, but things are going to be different now. I'm going to make it up to Mary, you'll see."

It was a very uncomfortable situation, Dad holding the picture looking from her to me and back to her again. There was a strange resemblance there, even I noticed it. We shared the same light brown hair and blue eyes. Mom had died of leukemia when she was 27, the same age I was now. I remember her, though I was so young. She had such loving ways, and she and Dad were so in love. It tore him up when she died, but he pulled himself together and managed to be both Mom and Dad for all those years.

"I've got to get ready for work, so you can relax or whatever," I said in an attempt to escape the situation. I walked down the hall and I could feel his eyes were on me. Closing the door behind me, I took off the blazer and skirt and hung them up. I realized I had left my work smock in the laundry room, so I opened the door to go and get it. It took me a few steps in the hall before I remembered about him, and I turned and hurried back in my room. I hoped he hadn't seen me, only dressed in my underwear. I pulled on my robe and returned back to the hall and headed down the stairs to the laundry room. I wondered where he had gone, the living room being empty, but I just got my smock and went back in my room and dressed. I wanted to leave this house, so I called to him that I was leaving and without waiting for a reply, closed the door behind me. It was hard to concentrate on work that day, thinking about going home to sleep in a house with a stranger. The day ended all too soon, and I was on my way home again.

con't.

When I walked in the house, Dad was sitting in the easy chair, the only light coming from the table lamp beside him. It was very quiet, and I wondered why he was sitting without the TV on. He always used to sit in that chair watching TV.

"Mary, things are starting out pretty bad. I went to talk to Jack today, and he gave me a run around about how they weren't hiring now, but if they did he'd call me. I knew what he was really thinking, though." I guess Dad was expecting sympathy, but I wasn't in the mood for giving it just then.

"It's o.k., Dad. We can make it on my salary until something comes up," I said, taking a seat across the room from him. I could sense his eyes looking at me, not the way a father looks at his daughter, but almost as if he was sizing me up. "I'm really tired, I'm going to bed," I said with a sigh. Just then the phone rang. "I'll get it in my room," I said, heading out of the room. Closing the door behind me, I picked up the phone.

"Mary?" the voice over the phone asked.

"Jim? Oh, am I glad you called," I replied softly. I think he sensed the relief in my voice.

"What's the matter? Is anything wrong?" he asked, concern in his words.

"Well, no, not really. My dad came home today, and it's really hard getting used to him. He seems to have really changed," I whispered.

"Just give it some time, he has only been home one day. He's been through quite a lot, you know."

I didn't want to tell Jim about how Dad didn't even want to know about him - the man who planned to marry his only child. I knew I didn't dare tell him of the way Dad was looking at me, so after a few more words of encouragement, we hung up. I felt much better, however. Just hearing his voice reassured me that things really would be o.k. I changed into my nightgown and decided to go to bed, even though it was only a little past ten.

For the rest of that week things seemed to go smoothly. I tried to always be going out, and kept the time we spent together at a minimum. Then came Sunday. I didn't have to go to work, and Jim was out of town with a client. I knew I'd have to stay home, and actually I was tired of always running out. After all, this was my house too. Dad was sitting at the kitchen table, the want ads spread in front of him. He looked up when I entered the room.

"Morning, honey, did you sleep well?" he asked cheerfully.

"Good morning. Oh, pretty well, thanks." Actually, I hadn't slept well at all; not last night or any night that week. The slightest noise made me jump in my bed. I had thought it strange when he opened my door last night and crept inside. I was still half awake, but I pretended to be sleeping. He stood there for a moment, then bent down and kissed my forehead, and turned and walked out. I lay there for a while afterward, feeling guilty for the things I had been thinking of him. He really did think of me as his little girl still, and he always kissed me good night then.

I suggested to him that maybe we go see a movie or something today, but he declined, saying he'd rather just sit home and re-acquaint himself with me today. I agreed and walked over to the stove to begin fixing us some breakfast. Opening the refrigerator, I noticed his eyes were on me again. Every move I made, he watched with intent. I brushed it off and continued to make breakfast. Instead of talking about us while we ate, Dad chose to talk about Mom. I thought this strange, since she had been gone for so long. I hung on his every word, though, because I wanted to know everything there was to know about my mother. He told me how beautiful she was, and how they used to do everything together, and how happy they were. It came as a great shock when she started to get sick, and when they found out she was going to die, they cried together and held one another for hours. He vowed to raise their baby girl as she would have. I could see tears welling in his eyes. "God gave me quite a gift in allowing you to grow up in her image," he continued.

This obsession of his of how I resembled her was really starting to worry me. I rose from the table and started gathering the dishes to escape his searching eyes. I hurried washing them, them returned to my room to dress. I reached for my V-neck sweater in the closet, but, changing my mind, I decided on a pull-over sweatshirt and a pair of jeans from my drawer.

The rest of the day we spent playing pinochle and watching a basketball game on TV. I was growing more comfortable, and I really did enjoy myself. After making a late dinner, I decided to go to bed, since I had to work early the next morning. I lay awake for a long time, but slowly I started to doze off. I could hear my doorknob turn and saw the hall light fill my room through my peeking eyes. I knew Dad was standing over me, but again I pretended to be asleep. He stood there for a long time, then again, as before, he bent down and kissed my forehead.

"Goodnight, honey," he whispered, then turned and quietly walked out of the room. It had been a good day, and I felt he was glad we were getting closer.

The next day I left early, glad Dad was still sleeping. I worked until six, then went to meet Jim at his office. He had promised to take me out to dinner, but I decided it was time he met Dad. Maybe if

con't.

Dad met him, he'd like Jim instead of ignoring his existence.

Then we pulled in the drive, the house was dark. I knew Dad wouldn't be sleeping, it was only a little past 7:30. Jim came inside, but after calling for him, we found out he wasn't home. Jim stayed a while, but by 10:00 decided it was getting late and he had to leave. I wondered where Dad would have gone, and I was worried. Jim assured me he was fine, and that one of his friends probably stopped by and he went out with him. I didn't believe this, but Dad's promise to quit drinking gave me some consolation. After Jim left, I was tired so I went to bed. I was still awake when Dad turned the key in the front door, but I stayed in bed instead of greeting him. Things were very quiet, and I hadn't heard Dad in the hall going to his room, so I lay and waited. Soon the door to my room opened.

"Oh, no, not again!" I thought to myself. I had thought about locking my door behind me that night, but I didn't want him to know I was suspicious of him. He stood over me again, then he did something different. He leaned forward and dropped on his hands, one on either side of me. I wondered what he was doing, and really got scared when I smelled the stale smell of beer on his breath. He took one of his hands and started combing through my hair with his fingers.

"Oh, Ann, baby. You've come home to me at last," Dad whispered. "You don't know how I've missed you.

By now I was in a "sleeping" panic. I knew from the past what kind of a temper he had when he had been drinking, but I also knew I had to do something. Just then he leaned over and kissed me, not on the forehead as before, but on my lips. This sickened me, and I knew my charade must end. I opened my eyes and attempted to push him away.

"Dad..Dad! It's me, Mary! Ann's dead, Dad...Mom's dead!

"Oh, Ann...I want you, honey," he said as though he hadn't heard a word I said. His hand reached for the blanket I had tucked under my chin. I knew I had to do something and fast, so I reached over and picked up my clock radio. I crashed it over his head, and he lost his balance and fell to the floor, the cord pulling the nightstand on top of him. I knew I hadn't hit him hard; I didn't really want to hurt him, just snap him out of his stupor. I took advantage of the moment and made a dash for my door, grabbing my purse from my dresser on the way. I didn't stop for a second, and ran outside in my nightgown and bare feet. I got in my car and started to back out the drive. My headlights reflected on Dad's image in the doorway, beckoning me to come back. I was crying hysterically by now. I had to go see Jim. I had to tell him about Dad's obsession. He would protect me. By the time I got there I was so hysterical I could hardly get the words out to explain what had happened. Jim held me and consoled me, and we sat for over an hour before I calmed down. I decided to just stay at Jim's. I was glad I hadn't given Dad his number or told him his name. I was safe there. I called work the next day and got a leave of absence because I was afraid he would come there to find me. I hated him for what he tried to do, but at the same time I felt sorry for him.

Finally, the next week, I needed clothes. I'd have to confront him sooner or later, and the longer I prolonged it, the worse it would be. Jim and I drove over to the house, and Dad answered the door. He had that same look in his eyes I recalled him having in prison. His head hung low as I walked past him, unable to look further at him, and didn't say a word. Jim stayed with him while I went to my room. Inside, the tipped nightstand and the cracked radio on the floor brought back the horrible episode. I hurriedly gathered some of my things together. I could faintly hear conversation coming from the living room, but I couldn't make out what they were saying. Walking out of my room, I headed straight for the door without saying a word. A few minutes later, Jim also walked through the door. Driving home, Jim was fairly quiet, but soon he broke his silence. "You know, Mary, your Dad feels really bad about what happened!"

"Oh, great. Now he's even playing on your sympathy," I said, sarcastically.

"Come on, Mary. Your Dad has a problem and he needs help and all you can do is shut him out of your life," Jim said disgustedly.

"After what he tried to do to me you expect me to want to help him?" I asked angrily.

"No, not you to help him. You just need to convince him to seek psychiatric help. From the way he was talking tonight, he feels he's ruined all chances for your love and respect!"

"You're dam right he has!" I broke in. "Any man that would consider raping his daughter doesn't deserve love or respect. He deserves..." I searched for the word "pity". My voice lowered as I said the word. I really did feel bad about not allowing Dad the chance to explain or apologize or anything. I told Jim to turn the car around, we were going back. Pulling in the drive, I hesitated, but Jim took my hand in his, and we walked up to the door. After knocking on the door and waiting a few minutes, there was no answer. I turned the knob and the door pushed open.

"Dad...Dad! Are you home? I called out. There was no answer. I looked at Jim and he must have seen the worry in my eyes.

"Maybe he's in the shower, or maybe

con't.

he stepped out for a minute," Jim said reassuringly. I walked through the living room and past my bedroom door to his door. I knocked lightly, but there was still no answer. "Dad, are you in here?" Still no answer. The door was slightly ajar, so I pushed it open. He lay face down on the bed. I flicked on the lightswitch and called to him again. He was kind of a heavy sleeper, so while Jim waited in the doorway, I walked over and holding his side, shook him, His body limply rolled over, and I could see blood trickling from the side of his head.

I screamed and Jim came to my side. After seeing Dad, he turned my face and I buried it in his shoulder.

"NO! NO! Not my daddy!" I said between sobs. I pushed Jim away, then knelt down beside Dad. Taking his coarse, cold hand in mine, I started rubbing it.

"Daddy...I love you so much. Why wouldn't you give me the chance to tell you? I forgive you for what happened that night, just as I forgave you before." I laid my cheek on his chest, sobbing uncontrollably. Jim tried to remove me from him, but I screamed at him to leave me alone. He left the room and I continued talking to Dad. "I've always admired you for how well you coped when Mom died. Daddy, please hear me!" I begged. I was still laying in that same position when two men with a stretcher and several policemen entered the room. Jim pulled me back against my will. The men looked at Dad, then lifted him on the stretcher. They pulled a white sheet up over his head.

"No! No! He's not dead! He can't be be!" I screamed. Jim held me tightly as the men carried Dad out of the room and out of the house. I now knew too the shame Dad had lived with all those years. I was sure I'd live with the same for the rest of my life. A seven year prison sentence would be nothing compared to living a life of guilt and shame. I felt I had been responsible for my father's death. I had killed him mentally, and he had merely taken his physical being's life. He left the world thinking his daughter, the only person in the world he had, hated him and was ashamed of him. I think all the time of how things could have been different, if only I hadn't left the house that day. If only I'd cared enough to be there, to encourage him to get help.

All the years of pride of resembling my mother quickly diminished. I knew the resemblance must only have been in our appearance. Mom had loved Dad so much, and I had destroyed him.

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LORRAINE BARON

A LOVE STORY

Forty years has not dampened my love for you. I gave up everything just for your pleasure. I tried to hide our unholy relationship, but those closest to me could see you in my eyes. My wife wouldn't tolerate my estranged devotion, and my children resented the changes you made in me.

Each day we spend together, my head whirls and my mind is clouded with forgetfulness of the things I have left behind. There are moments when I feel regrets, but those are fleeting. I can't live without your fulfilling oblivion. My senses and being crave the feelings you bring. Somehow, I am not a complete person without this added dimension to my personality.

Slowly, you are destroying me on the inside, but I don't care. My life is nothing unless I can be satisfied by you.

Oh, the dreams of the unreal world you cause in me. Each night when I see your beautiful shimmer in the dim light, my enchantment is renewed. Reason departs as fantasy and virulent visions take control of my brain. I press you to my lips with the eagerness of a young lover anticipating the changes you will make in my body and my mind. Nothing must stand in our way! With trembling hand, I raise you to my lips and drink you down. "Bartender, another round."

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SUE SOUCIE

YOU ARE LIFE

Sleeping 'neath a city filled with pain,
A lighter heart than that with which I came,
I feel about the same.
Except in daydreams - -
I can scale the mighty tower
built for me by the king,
Who wonders why I always sing,
about yesterday.

The future is delayed because of past times,
It's gone and left before I really care-
And suddenly,
the future is no longer there.

It's over-

The silence binds my thoughts about you-

I doubt you.

NANCY LOCKHART

I NEED TO GO TO THE ZOO

I need to go to the zoo.
I need to become reacquainted with animal smells
And men who sell balloons.
I need to feed polar bears and smile at patient grandmothers.
I need to step in bubble gum
And ride a crowded bus.
I need to give a little girl a boost at the drinking fountain.
I need to have sore feet and messed-up hair.
I need to look up at the monkeys.

JUDY BELFIELD

IT'S ANIMAL-SQUASHING SEASON

It's animal-squashing season:
Bunnies and squirrels and coons and birds and possums
now take to the roads
for their last trips.
They scurry and scamper and flutter and flit;
they hop and hobble
with the first signs of spring
onto the streets and highways:
They meet big, black, rubber tires
that seem so eager
to kiss their furry/feathery bodies.

It's spring!
and all the world's coming to life --
but some lives are doomed
because
it's animal-smashing time.

******

VOICES ONLY PLAY

BY SUE CARLSON

INPUT: talk to me!!

PROGRAMMER: TEENAGE UNIT BORN IN '80's

OUTPUT: (computer voice)

January 18, 1980

greetings...greetings...welcome to back time.

I would like to introduce Myself to you, lowly listener. Since I, the ultimate, ageless analyst, have been allowed 18 sun cycles to process the passing of a decade-assessment of that decade is easily objective. by now, no one can, of course, remember living within the time warp of the decade called the seventies. through a long range study, I have reassimilated Myself into that ancient era in which I came of age. so with My MEMORY switch on full blast, I plunge back into the primative place of My childhood...

OUTPUT: (young child's far-away "let's play make-believe voice) no one who was anyone in the suicidal seventies dared to claim them significant, socially relevant, or symbolic after the turbulent, terribly troubled sixties. yet, those of the time had the outstanding trait of feeling that They stood out as individuals of rare importance. hmmmm--a Me decade of sorts. certainly not a new thought, frightfully trite, in fact... but...

OUTPUT: (violently female voice, feminist protester) the cynical seventies were My Me decade, don't you see??? I mean if the diffidence of the decade prevented us from experiencing our own united forces, like the beatles, the enlightenment, the jungian revolution, well, we simply stood by our brahmas, est awareness programs, and jogging suits. if our isolation advanced social ignorance in discovering dynamic new artists, fads, and follies, it also served to promote the complete individual--ravishing in designer dreams, mannequinesque manners, and exquisite eliteness...on the outside, anyway...an egg without a yolk, having a perfect shell. is the shell of use?? (child interrupts) "Mommy, Mommy" (slapping sound) shut up subunit I'm justifying an attitude that led to, well...

OUTPUT: (deep, calm narrative voice, sexless, ageless) imagine, if you can, a society of narcissists.
not too difficult, really.
but imagine a society of such self-involved people that they become selfless.

selfishness leads to selflessness REPEAT
selfishness leads to selflessness

it's now in the notes but words only lead to words anymore.

i've learned of a people so very suave, so very silly, so very isolated, that they lost out on themselves.
as the decade ended, they knew in their intestines, they knew how they should be bringing in the new decade. it was too late for

Burning down bars in protest
picketing in the parkways for pacifism
Brawling in the boulevards
protesting on the police patrolled

there comes a time when a society becomes so self that members can no longer operate together at all. how can events be organized even when they are to benefit all the Selfs when all are beyond communication?

OUTPUT: (computer voice) appearances are all. the seventies taught that. that is why, Children of the 80's, you are all alike. we were too uniformly diverse. you shall have no problems communicating. there is no longer any need to communicate.

<u>that</u> is the significance of the seventies...

FINIS

*****

JUDY BELFIELD

I PASS THROUGH THE DAY

I pass through the day like molasses --
or burnt Karo syrup.
Brown and lazy,
I blend into another minute --
and then the hour.

I am lost in a calendar
that remembers only red and green
or red, white and blue
or red hearts --
red cherries,
red letters.

I ooze from one page to the next
sticking them together --
sweet enough to make them puke me out
into a world where time
is not marked on paper with ink
or on the face of a clock,
but is etched on the soul
with a razor.

* * *

COLEEN FABRYCKI

FOR SURVIVAL

He was there in the gathering dusk when the light blue Buick pulled into the drive. Crouched under the bushes in front of the limestone ranch, he perked up his ears. His green eyes glowed momentarily in the headlights.

Voices. A car door slamming. A woman...a child.

"Careful, Lori, that cone's about to drip." Marian lifted her granddaughter from the car, took a kleenex from her purse, and dabbed at the edges of the melting ice cream cone.

Lori pulled away, toddling toward the house. "Kitty, Gram. Kitty," she exclaimed.

"Kitty? Where?"

"There kitty." Pointing.

"Wait a minute, honey," her voice softened. "Lori, we have to go very slowly and very quietly if we want to pet kitty or kitty will run away."

The cat came out of the bushes. He knew this voice. It was the voice that had spoken softly, coaxingly to him, called kitty...kitty...kitty...when he stalked the wooded lot across the street. It was the voice that belonged to the hands that had once taken him unaware from a watching spot - scooped up his tensing body and stroked him - only once- and freed him gently before he could react.

The cat came out of the bushes. The woman, with the child in hand, stepped cautiously toward him.

Suddenly, a convertible, top down, careened into the drive. "Hey, you two, two, what's doint?" Richard called and Karen waved.

Marian's head turned toward the car.

The cat attacked.

Leaping her full height, she was at her head. Teeth and claws dug into her scalp, her shoulder, her neck, ripping... gashing...

Lori screamed. Her ice cream cone was a chocolate splash in the grass.

Then he was gone - at full run, across the street, angling toward the houses to the south - a black streak disappearing into the darkness.

"Mom, my God, are you all right?" Her son ran toward her. Karen, close behind, scooped up Lori who was shrieking incoherently. "Mom?" Richard reached out helplessly, not knowing what to do. "Are you all right?" he repeated.

Marian stood doubled over, hands clutching her head. Slowly she withdrew one hand, held it out before her. " I don't know," she murmured, 'I'm bleeding."

The hand was streaked with blood. Large droplets were pulsing from her scalp, mingling with her gray-blonde hair, seeping down the side of her face and neck, purpling the collar of the sky-blue blouse she wore. She started to tremble.

"In the house," Karen ordered. "Get the keys, Rich, and bring some paper towels - wet ones. Stop crying, Lori." She set her down. "It's all right."

Once inside, Karen steered her mother-in-law to the bathroom where she helped her off with her blouse and examined the damage. There were five gashes, three in

con't.

her scalp, one low on her neck, the last on her shoulder. The hydrogen peroxide foamed as Karen disinfected each one.

"This one's awfully deep. I think we'd better get you to a doctor. Here, keep this on it. Press down. It's still bleeding."

Marian held the wad of paper towel to her scalp while Karen quickly taped pads of gauze bandage to the two wounds on her neck and shoulder and helped her put her blouse back on, awkwardly switching hands to get her arms through the sleeves. "Shouldn't I change my blouse?"

"No, don't," Karen replied. "You'd just get it bloody too. Why in the world would a cat attack you. Whose cat is it, anyway?"

"I'm not sure, but I've seen him around all summer. I think he belongs to those people four houses down."

Richard and Lori were waiting in the living room. Richard was petting Grey, the large-headed foundling Marian had adopted a year or so ago, explaining to a round-eyed Lori that Grey would not hurt her.

"Kitty bited Gram," Lori insisted.

"Yes, but the kitty that bit Gram was a kitty we don't know. Grey won't bite you, Lori. Grey likes you."

"Just stay away from stgange cats," Karen inserted. "Rich, you'd better take your mom over to emergency. You can drop us off on the way. It's past Lori's bedtime already."

They were silent in the car during the short drive to Richard and Karen's home. At the hospital, there was the usual long wait, the filling out of numerous forms. Finally a young intern examined Marian. He emitted a low whistle of surprise. "That must have been some cat," he exclaimed. "I've never seen a cat do this much damage."

"He's a fighter. Can you imagine. One move and he left me with five scars."

He shaved the areas around the scalp wounds, used seven stitches to close the bite, and had the nurse give her a tetanus shot. "Those stitches should come out in about a week. Make an appointment with your doctor," he dismissed her, "and stay away from strange cats."

"You sound just like my daughter-in-law," Marian smiled a "thank you", but he had already turned to attend his next patient.

"All set?" Richard put down the magazine he was scanning.

"All stitched up, good as new." They walked into the warm summer night. "I have to have the stitches out in a week. I can't help wondering why that cat attacked me. I thought we were making friends."

Richard held the car door open for her. "I think I must have startled him, yelling like that."

"Probably. He certainly seems to avoid people. But he must belong to someone. He's too well-fed and healthy to be a stray."

"That's the cat that's always getting in fights with Grey, isn't it?"

"Uh huh. Though I don't think you could call it fighting." Marian grinned. "All Grey's bites seem to be on his tail. Maybe if he'd stand and fight, the vet bills wouldn't be so high."

"Well, Grey doesn't have to worry, Mom, with an old softie like you to take care of him." He pulled into his mother's drive. "Want me to come in with you for awhile?"

"No, I'm fine. It's late and you have to catch that early flight tomorrow."

"I wish that conference weren't this week. Well, I'll have Karen give you a call tomorrow. See how you are."

"Okay, hon," Marian touched her 24-year-old son lightly on the shoulder. "And thanks for driving me."

Waving from the picture window as Richard pulled away, her eyes moved to the lot across the street. She remembered the first time she had seen that strange black cat.

It had been at dusk early in the spring. He was only a shadowy image captured in the corner of her eye - a slithering movement in the trees and underbrush of the only lot in the neighborhood where a house had not displaced nature. She had felt, even then, not a premonition but a moment of unease, a stillness of motion in herself as she strained her eyes in the growing darkness to identify the intruder.

Cat. The tension of her muscles had relaxed. She'd watched him move purposefully past the FOR SALE sign, gone now, she noted. Perhaps the owners gave up on selling a lot so clearly unsuited for building. Then he'd turned and disappeared into the small ravine angling down the slope away from the street. She'd been left with a sense of smooth flowing motion and controlled vitality.

Now she remained at the window, letting the quietness and the natural beauty of that small section of unspoiled land seep into her consciousness. Grey came and rubbed around her ankles. "Come on, old coward," she said to him, "that big, black bully got me, too." She shrugged away the tiny pin-prick of undefined worry and headed for bed.

The next day Marian felt loggy and uncomfortable. She slept in most of the morning, unusual for her. Karen phoned around noon. "Be sure to make that doctor's appointment today," she admonished.

"Such an efficient girl my son has married, Marian thought as she put down the receiver and pulled the phone book

con't.

toward her to look up the clinic's number. Matter-of-fact, take-charge women like Karen were not Marian's style, yet she liked Karen. It was just that sometimes Karen seemed so...so tough.

"Clinic," Marian muttered, scanning the lengthy list of specialists under the heading. "Now what kind of specialist do I need to take out stitches?"

The phone rang. It was Dennis Mailing. There was an open-air art fair in the park that afternoon. Would she like to go with him and have dinner somewhere afterward?

Not really. Not today. She explained about the cat and how she was feeling. Dennis was appalled and sympathetic, but such a woebegone note crept into his voice at her implied refusal that she agreed to go, knowing he wouldn't go alone. It wasn't the art fair; it was just something to do.

Dennis taught history at the high school where Marian had done so much volunteer tutoring in the year following Jack's death. A widower himself - his wife had died of cancer several years before - he and Marian had drifted into a kind of good friend relationship, each supplying the other with a companionship they both needed.

Marian made one attempt to dial the clinic and got a busy signal. Dennis had said fifteen minutes, so she hurridly changed from her shorts into a blue slack suit, selecting a blouse with a collar that could be turned up to mask the bandage on the side of her neck. She found a scarf to wrap turban-style around her short-cropped hair, ran a lipstick around her lips, and was ready when Dennis arrived.

The afternoon and evening passed lightly and Marian was glad she'd gone. Dennis was full of interesting information, an attentive listener, sensitive to her moods and feelings. At 52, four years older than she, he was an attractive man, even-featured, his gray hair giving him a look of distinction. He was, Marian admitted in honesty, more conventionally handsome than Jack had ever been. But then, Jack was Jack. His power of attraction had come from energy and enthusiasm and a strength of purpose. Never mind a slightly crooked nose, eyebrows a little too dark and heavy. Jack had been....Jack. Marian shivered slightly as she fed Grey and prepared for bed. She still missed him, she knew. She still, after two years, sometimes couldn't believe that so much life could disappear in one crushing burst of a heart - that Jack was gone.

Karen was at her door at 8:30 the next morning. "Where were you yesterday?" she demanded. "I tried to call you four times."

"I went with Dennis to the art fair and then we had dinner at Albrights. Why? Was it something important? Did you want me to watch Lori?"

"I just wanted to see how you were. You must be feeling all right, then. How <u>is</u> Dennis? Did you have fun?"

"Oh, yes, we had a good time." Marian really didn't want to say more. She was aware of Karen's heightened interest. Richard's, too. She suspected both of them were hoping for a marriage. Over the summer she had also noticed a shifting in Dennis' attitude. He had become more possessive of her time, expecting her availability whenever he called. <u>Well</u>, <u>perhaps</u>, she thought, <u>but not yet</u>.

"When's your appointment?" Karen asked.

"Appointment?"

"You know, to have the stitches out."

"Oh, dear, I forgot."

"Marian, what <u>am</u> I going to do with you? Never mind, I'll call." She walked into the kitchen, flipped through the phone book, and dialed. "Who should I make an appointment with to have stitches taken out?" Marian heard her ask.

Marian ran water into the coffee pot, scooped in the coffee, and plugged in the pot.

"Yes, I want to make an appointment for Marian Rhodes. She was biten by a cat two days ago and had stitches at the emergency room. She's supposed to have the stitches out...What? Yes. I'll wait."

"What is it?" Marian asked, setting out cups and saucers.

"She wants me to talk to the doctor.."

Both women waited silently. A slight frown creased Karen's brow. She was listening to a voice on the phone. "Yes, the day before yesterday, in the evening. On her head...Well, yes...seven, I think." Aside to Marian. "Was it seven stitches?" Marian nodded. "Yes, seven. No, I'm sure they didn't..." A long pause. "All right. Yes, right away. Thankyou, doctor."

"What's the matter?" Marian was alarmed.

"He wants you to come in right now and start rabies shots." Karen reached over and unplugged the coffee pot. "Come on, I'll drive you."

"Rabies shots! But don't you usually have several days before you have to start those? Shouldn't we find the cat-have him observed?"

"Not when it's so close to the brain. That's what he said. Marian, he said they should have been started <u>immediately</u>. Marian, come <u>on</u>." Karen had picked up her purse and was halfway out the door. Marian followed.

At the clinic, the doctor, a surgeon, saw them at once. He very briefly examined Marian's wounds and administered

con't.

the first of a series of rabies vaccine- a shot in the upper left hand side of the abdomen. Only then did he ask in detail about the attack and take notes. He was clearly furious with the hospital intern who had not even mentioned the possibility of rabies to Marian. He was also clearly concerned about her. He advised searching for the cat. "If you find it, make sure it's confined and call me. I'll get the Health Department on it. If it's healthy, you won't need the whole series of 21 shots."

"I thought it was just 14?" Marian spoke hesitantly.

"That's normal, but with a case like this, we want to make sure." Marian was to come in every morning, yes, even Sunday when the clinic was closed. He would meet her there. They were dismissed.

As they left, they passed him in the hall by the nurses' station. "Check our supply of rabies vaccine," he was ordering a young nurse, "and get me the county health office on the phone..."

On the ride home, Karen turned and asked Marian if the shot was very painful. "No," she replied, "no worse than any shot. I suppose they get bad when you've had several in the same area..."

"Well, we'll find that cat. Then you won't have to have them all," Karen replied with determination.

But it took three days. The cat did not belong to the people four houses down the street, although they knew about "that cat." It had badly mauled their terrier. Karen left Lori with a neighbor and spent her days walking the neighborhood streets, asking children and housewives if they knew "that cat." Many did. He was real mean, the children reported. You couldn't get near him. The women knew about him, too. He had fought with their pets. He had killed a half-grown male tom. He was a menace.

Finally, eleven blocks away from Marian's house, Karen found the owner. "Yes, that sounds like my husband's cat," the woman said. "He's not around much. Mostly he just comes here to eat every day or two. I didn't see him at all yesterday."

"When he comes home, will you keep him in and call me?" Karen asked. "I'll bring Mrs. Rhodes over to see if it's the right cat. If it is, you know it has to go to the animal shelter for observation."

"That's all right. I'm not surprised he finally attacked someone. You should see the way he comes home sometimes, all scratched and beaten up. My husband has to pour rubbing alcohol all over him. He's the only one who can handle him."

"Here's my phone number." Karen handed her a slip of paper. "Please call right away. The sooner we get the cat, the sooner she can stop taking the rabies shots."

The call came at seven p.m. The cat was home. The cat seemed healthy.

With relief, Marian headed for the house with Karen. "I knew that cat didn't have rabies, Karen. People were just so suspicious because they couldn't imagine a cat acting like that if something weren't wrong. But he's just a different kind of cat than they're used to, isn't he. He's obviously a fighter - look at all you found out about him. He's just an old toughie. When he was startled, he reacted out of instinct...his instinct for survival....

"Marian," Karen cut off her flow of words. "He's dangerous. Think! Next time it could be a child."

Marian felt as if the bottom of her stomach had suddenly dropped away. Of course I knew it all along, she realized. What none of us said. It could so easily have been Lori. Her little face, her unprotected eyes...I can't save the cat.

The man brought the cat from a back bedroom where it had been locked up. Marian shrank away momentarily when he was released, but the cat moved over to her, rubbing around her ankles.

"He knows her, all right," the woman said. "He never makes up to strangers."

Marian reached down slowly - she stroked the shiny black fur. "I'm sorry too," she whispered.

When she asked the question, the man agreed instantly. She was brushing away tears as they left.

"Don't feel so bad," Karen consoled when she dropped Marian off. "You could tell they'd already decided it had to be done."

"I know."

"I'll call the shelter for you tomorrow and make sure," Karen laid her hand over Marian's briefly.

Such a matter-of-fact girl. Karen. Marian thought. Yet, she's right. Of course she's right.

"Karen, thanks...for the time you spent...for everything."

She stood in her front yard near the bushes where the cat had attacked her, gazing across the street where now surveyor's sticks marked the corners and several trees were Xed with chalk. Soon it would be gone.

******

NANCY LOCKHART

I HEAR MY BONES

My bones are sea shells,
Hollow with the sounds of far away.
My bones are knitting needles.
I hear them clicking and pulling apart.
My bones are rocking chair bones
Keeping time with the crickets in the
Front porch breeze.
I hear my lonely bones.
They echo like a tap dancer's shoes
In an empty theatre.
I hear my kitchen bones and my bedroom bones.
They rub together like branches in a storm.
My bones are frightened yellow children.
I hear them cleave. I hear them cry.
My bones are eggshells which loudly crack
Then break apart.
My bones are dust.
How silently they rise
And blow away...

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JAMES B. MILLER

THE ALCOHOLIC

As I looked at the bathroom I was now pleasantly relaxing and taking a bath in, I realized that this was what you now called a "modern bathroom." There were cabinets above and below the clean and decorated sink, sliding mirrors covering the medicine cabinet, rugs on the floor, a beautiful round stand with shelves stacked with cosmetics, and the walls were beautifully decorated in attractive bright colors. Even the toilet seat was covered attractively.

Then I had to think back 2 years and 6 months ago to when I had to share a cubicle of a bathroom with everyone that lived on this same floor. In it was a rusty old bathtub, that was extremely small, no medicine cabinet, a dirty sink that someone had leaned on too hard and it was tilted to the front with the pipes going into the wall showing. There were no mats on the floor, and the linoleum was dirty, peeling, and gone in some spots. There was a broken piece of mirror that was pasted on the wall above the sink.

I had to share the kitchen on this floor also, which was just as dirty as the bathroom, in it were two old refrigerators, one stove, and one table with two shaky chairs. There were 6 one room apartments on this floor and every room was occupied. This type of living quarters was called a one room apartment with a "community kitchen" and a "community bath," and rented for $75.00 a month.

My thing at the time was to drink wine, which was what I could afford for I could hold no job, or any other form of alcoholic beverage I could get, every day, all day, and for stretches of days on end until my body had enough and I would be too sick that morning to get out of bed. My stomach would feel like ten men were walking in it dropping bowling balls, my head felt like the Gods of Thunder were inside and at war with each other, and my mouth tasted like the fish the cat threw-up. I would have an unquenchable thirst, or commonly called "a hot box," and every time I drank cold water, which was foolishly quite often, I had to violently throw-up. I would be down on both knees, with both hands on either side of the toilet bowl and my head would hang down inches from the water in the bowl. I then commenced a serenade of violent upheavels that only produced yellow bile; for when I wasn't drinking and during my "sick days" or R & R (Rest and Recuperation) as I called them, I made promises to myself that this would be the last time; however, when I got well I was once again tempted to start back drinking, each time saying "This time I can handle it."

Then I started praying "Deliver me O' Lord from out of this vicious cycle I now find myself in, and horribly unable to control."

Each night, when sick, hardly able to slide out of my bed to get on my knees and pray, I did. I prayed hard, earnest, sincere, gut-level prayers, and asked that my position in life would somehow change for the better. 2 years, 6 months later, it has changed for the better. My prayers were answered, I never forget by whom. Somebody up There Likes Us, and Hears Us When we Sincerely Call.

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PAT BOHLER

VICTORIA J.

"Victoria J. Saunders, Mr. Morrison. Isn't it a glorious day?"

The Postmaster looked over the top of his glasses at the blonde, dimpled vision across the counter. "Yes, May I help you?"

"It's me. Vickey Saunders." She flashed a smile and giggled at his puzzlement.

"Vickey? For heaven's sake. I didn't recognize you. You certainly have changed."

"I haven't been in this place for three years. I go to the university, you know. I'm a cheerleader, of course. President of Phi. Psi., and I still have my marimba lessons. Naturally I always make the Dean's List, because anyone who is anyone always does. Well, you know how it is?" She rolled her eyes.

"No, Vickey. I don't have the slightest idea of how it is." He rolled his eyes in imitation of her and laughed. "What can I do for you?"

"Oh, silly me. I almost forgot. Daddy asked me to pick up Grandmother's mail for him while he's at the Masonic Convention in Chicago. Isn't my Daddy just the sweetest man you've ever met?" She gushed on. "Of course, he made me promise that I wouldn't go into her house. He said just leave it inside the front door."

Mr. Morrison turned from the window and grinned as he pulled a letter from one of the cubby holes on the back wall. With the letter in his hand he looked toward the ceiling and whispered, "Thank you, dear Lord, for sparing me these past three years Victoria J. Saunders."

Turning, he placed the letter on the counter. Vickey picked it up with her thumb and forefinger as if it were contaminated and dropped it into her thin white purse.

"Thank you, Mr. Morrison. You're just swell." She turned to go.

"It's always nice to see you, Vickey. Give my best to your Grandmother."

Vickey spun to face the postmaster. "For goodness sake, Mr. Morrison, I would never think that anyone like <u>you</u> would admit knowing my Grandmother. We don't even like to admit that she is one of <u>our</u> family. Do you know that she actually shot-guns the possums that raid her berry patch. You'd think she still lived in the country by her behavior. Don't tell anyone, but she actually has honey dripping from her living-room ceiling because she doesn't want to disturb the swarm that moved into her attic five years ago. The crazy old thing is a trial for us alright, especially for Daddy, and him such a saint, too."

"I-I-I- I really must get back to work now." The Postmaster backed around the corner into the main sorting room and listened with his back pressed to the partition hoping to hear her leave. There was no sound from the other side for a full minute. Then he heard her voice, thick and sweet as syrup.

"Mr. Morrison, you don't doubt my word, do you?"

He couldn't believe it. Her voice came through the letter slot next to his elbow. He stood back to look. Sure enough, those blue eyes were watching him. They weren't dancing anymore. They weren't angry either, just coldly determined. He stood there with his mouth hanging open.

"Do you know what Grandmother did to Daddy and the family just last Sunday?" She yelled through the slot as if he were deaf.

"No, Vickey, I don't. Please. I really don't want to know." His voice begged, but in spite of himself he found he was intrigued by the gabby cherub that stared him down. So he didn't move, waiting for her to continue.

"We were at church. She sent Lloyd Benson with a note that said that Daddy, Mother and I were to come at once; that it was an emergency. We rushed over there with Daddy thinking that all kinds of dreadful things must be wrong because Grandmother hadn't included Mother in an invitation since she and Daddy got married, but that's another story. Well, can you guess who was there when we arrived? Aunt Sarah and Cousin Julie's baby. To say the least, we were horrified that Grandmother had exposed us to that filthy child."

"Isn't that baby only three weeks old? I don't understand what you mean." The Postmaster was puzzled.

"Cancer. The baby's mother, my cousin Julie, is dying of cancer. Grandmother let Aunt Sarah bring that red, shriveled thing right into her own house and exposed us all to it. It's contaminated. Can you imagine a more terrible thing to do to her own flesh and blood?" Vickey was indignant.

Mr. Morrison returned to the window and quietly asked, "what did your Grandmother want you for?"

"Well, she said that she wanted Mother and I to help her care for the baby so Aunt Sarah could be with Julie at the hospital in Pontiac."

"What did you do?" The Postmaster leaned on his elbows watching Vickey.

"Fortunatly, I didn't have to do anything. Daddy, the saint that he is, took over to spare Mother and I any unpleasantness. He told Aunt Sarah to take the baby to that bunch of Catholics that Julie married into and let them care

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for it. Then Grandmother said that she was ashamed of Daddy. Can you imagine anyone being ashamed of my Daddy? Well, Mother and I were just floored by her insensitiveness."

"What did your Aunt Sarah do?" Mr. Morrison was completly absorbed in the story now.

"Well, I must say she had the good sense to bundle the baby up and leave. Grandmother said after Aunt Sarah was gone that she intended to go get the baby and that she would care for it alone. Then she ordered us out of her sight. She said that we disgusted her. Can you imagine?"

"So your Grandmother is caring for the baby?" Mr. Morrison choked down an impulse to laugh. "Many people have questioned me here at the post office about the baby and Julie. How is Julie, anyway?"

"I don't know and I really don't care. I never did like Julie anyway. Daddy thinks it would be a blessing if she died. That Catholic husband of hers hasn't been a bit of help to Aunt Sarah or Uncle Walt. He goes out at 3 a.m. and picks up cream at the farms for Roselle's Ice Cream plant in Pontiac. For heaven's sake, I'll never be able to eat their ice cream again. Then he works that dirty little farm of his the rest of the day. On weekends he works as a guard at the prison. That is the worst scandal of all - to actually know someone connected with all those criminals. Then, in his spare time, he mopes around the hospital. It's just so unfair that Julie has brought all this on the family."

"Julie didn't get cancer on purpose. You know better than that, Vickey. Then I found out that those kids didn't have insurance for the hoppital bills, I asked my brother, Warden Morrison, to take on Julie's husband at the prison because he had told me that he wanted to take Julie to Dr. Petit's Cancer Treatment Clinic in Ottawa so they could begin x-ray treatments."

"Yes, I know about the clinic. They took her over three days ago. Now the family over there will be exposed to it." Vickey was dismayed. "See how it gets spread around?"

"Vickey, you can't get cancer from other people." The Postmaster tried to sound kind.

"This is 1938, Mr. Morrison. Sometimes I think that the people in this town still live in the dark ages." She raised her hands in exasperation.

"I'm sorry that you feel that way, but I don't believe we're all that ignorant." The man was suddenly on the defense.

"Well, I know a little more about it than you do. There is this chemistry Oh, dear." She blushed. "I mean this chemistry professor that I know and he told me that even he isn't really sure that you can't get cancer from other people. He thinks it comes from dirtiness just like a lot of other diseases. If he and my Daddy both think that way, then that's good enough for me."

"I can't ever hope to compete with such great minds, so why don't you just lump me in with your Grandmother and all the rest of the hicks in this town. Now, if you will excuse me, I have to get back to work." Mr. Morrison turned to go.

"You'll see. They do know what they are talking about. Nothing you say will change my mind about it. Julie and that baby have contaminated our whole family, and it's my Grandmother's fault for exposing us." She stood her ground.

"Vickey, if your family is contaminated, it isn't from cancer- it's from ignorance. Now, get out of here and leave me alone." Mr. Morrison left her with her mouth hanging open. As he turned toward the sorting table, she replied:

"Wait until I tell Daddy about this."

"Go!" He yelled. He heard her heels clicking across the room toward the door. When he heard the door slam he turned on the radio and worked his anger out on the pile of letters on the table. As he flipped the letters into their proper cubby holes, a postcard with a familiar scene caught his eye. Millard Bridge in Ottawa. It was addressed to Vickey's grandmother. The message was:

Dear Mother:

Julie conscious. Wants to be home with new daughter. Dr. says she will make it if treatment begins at once. Hugs and kisses for you and my granddaughter. Thank you.

Your loving daughter,
Sarah.

Mr. Morrison put the card into it's slot. He returned to the pile of letters on the table, tapping his foot to the music blaring from the radio. "What nonsense," he thought. "Daddy ain't been to a Masonic convention since he and Maggie Gaspardo started playing house ten years ago."

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JUDY BELFIELD

I DON'T WANT TO BE HER

I have become what she is --
though every time I see it,
I fight to change.
Yet I have to fight --
because she
is what comes naturally to me.
Certainly,
she is not such a horrible creature --
I could do worse.
It's just that she and I,
like mirrored images,
reflect too much the same
And I don't want to be her . . .

****

I STAND IN THE SUPERMARKET

I stand in the supermarket
and I am isolated.
It is Saturday morning
and people are shoving each other down aisles
and into checkout lanes;
they buzz with one another
and plop their groceries into hungry baskets.
They never stop.
Looking over the boxes and cans on the shelves,
selecting this and that,
they keep moving.
I stand in the center of this activity
and think,
"They do not exist --
I am dreamwalking
and this is not real."
I wonder that they cannot see me falling apart;
I stand here dying
and they do not know or care --
I am amazed that my control
conceals the ax
that steadily hacks away at my gut.
I want to cry, but don't. . .
I am not having a good day.
I want to lie down near the ice-cream compartment
and go to sleep.
I feel a helplessness creeping over me.
My head begins to spin
and I put out my hand,
holding fast to a shelf
and I close my eyes
and think,
"I've got to get home."
I feel a surge of acid
rushing up from my stomach.
My insides rumble
from boulders tumbling within --
and I'm going to be sick . . .

*****

NANCY LOCKHART

A RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AT THE SILVER PLATTER BAR

Hey guy, you look John-the-Baptist cute
In that white leisure suit and burnt sienna beard.
Saintly, ain't he! I mused as my elbow desecrated
His ribs.
I've a question for your nibs:
Do you give good head?

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TOM DITSCH

TWO WITH NATURE

Walking down the road
I chanced upon a toad.
I stopped awhile and asked him how he felt,
He said he felt ok,
But that was for today,
And then he hopped off from where I knelt.

Going to a stream,
I saw a fishes' gleam,
I stopped awhile to see how life had been,
He said that it might rain,
In fact, it was quite plain,
And with a splash I was alone again.

Climbing up a tree,
I happened by a bee,
I settled back and let him have his space,
He looked at me with a grin,
And buzzed around my chin,
And all the time my heart quickened pace.

He said to me, "Good sir,"
"What makes you, as it were,"
"Feel that you're a part of our small space?"
I looked at him in fear,
His words had stung my ear,
I informed him I was from the human race.

With that he said, "My friend,"
"Will our friendship never end?"
"Although you beat and eat us as you please?"
And then he came so close,
And buzzed around my nose,
that I heard a muffled knocking from my knees.

Quickly with a slap,
I crushed the little chap,
Before my face became his lunch-time feast,
And looking with a smile,
I'd missed for quite a while,
I mentioned that man must rule above the beasts.

And as I walked towards home again that day,
The beasts and birds and flowers turned away.

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DEBBIE GIBSON

MIZRA

Scott Preston pulled his Suburu into the rustic, two-car garage. Getting out, he stretched his legs and growled with fatigue. The 150 mile drive had left him tired, yet restless. He needed this vacation. His accounting job in Milwaukee had grown stale in the past few months, so when his senior partner suggested that he take a breather at his summer cottage on Green Bay, Scott had gladly accepted.

He squinted his eyes against the late afternoon sun and surveyed the small bungalow. Its weathered brown front looked serene; it blended with the g greenery engulfing it. The ruffled waves of Green Bay winked through the thin foliage. Peaceful. Just what he needed. Scott slapped his thigh with satisfaction and unloaded his cases from the hatchback.

Once in the cottage, he dropped his baggage and collapsed on the worn couch. Bob and Angie had been to the cottage a week earlier and had left the utilities on and the refrigerator semi-stocked. He was ready for two weeks of nothing. No phones. No ceaseless stacks of papers to prepare. He nestled into the sofa and drifted into a light sleep.

A muffled noise from above brought him to his senses. He listened, but the house remained silent. He shook his head, had he dreamt it? No, the dull thump sounded again. He cautiously climbed the stairs. A slam drew his

con't.

attention to the door to his right. He peered in to find an attractive blonde storing clothes on an oak bureau. He cleared his throat. The young woman swung around, stifling a barely audible scream.

"Who are you?" she demanded. Her hands clutched the dresser as she stared at him defiantly.

Scott's mind raced. What kind of vacation had Bob set up for him? A secluded refuge and a beautiful girl? He studied her. Startled green eyes returned his stare. It didn't seem as though she expected him. He'd better play it cool.

"I don't know who you are, but I'm Scott Preston, and this cottage happens to belong to a friend of mine. I'm using it for a few weeks. So what are you doing here?" Humor tinged his voice as he gave her a slight smile. He didn't want to frighten her.

The alarm left her eyes. "That's strange," she said. "That's my situation." Her defensive nature dissolved. She approached Scott, proffered her hand, and said in a sultry voice, "Hi, my name's Mizra."

He shook her hand and asked, "You know Bob and Angie too? I wonder why they lent the cottage to both of us at the same time without letting us know?"

"Maybe they thought we'd need each other's company," she returned with a seductive smile.

Their eyes locked and Scott knew that the next two weeks were going to be more than he had bargained for.

Scott smiled at his reflection in the mirror as he shaved. The past three days had been terrific. He was falling in love. The days of swimming and the nights of making love had rejuvenated him. The office seemed a million miles away. How could he return to his normal life without Mizra? It seemed impossible. He brushed the sad thoughts away as he bathed his face with a hot cloth.

During the lazy days he had told Mizra his life story. She never uttered a word about herself. Every time he questioned her, she would laugh and beg him not to waste their time with such boring trivia. Her mysteriousness was driving him crazy.

Tonight would solve everything. It would be their first venture from the cottage and he wanted to find a romantic restaurant for the big event. After all, wasn't candlelight a necessity for proposing marriage? If Mizra felt the same as he did, wedding bells would be ringing soon. He would then find out all there was to know about his enigmatic Mizra.

They parked the Suburu in front of the chalet styled restaurant. A group of tanned tourists were leaving as they entered. Scott was relieved to find the cozy interior romantic and candlelit, just as he had hoped it would be. The hostess looked confused when Scott requested a table for two. She hesitantly led them to a secluded table and left hurriedly. Scott was perplexed by the young girl's bizzare behavior, but Mizra's scornful laughter erased his worries.

Throughout dinner Mizra continued to evade Scott's inquiries about her life. She steered the conversation into different subjects, so that by the time dessert arrived, Scott decided to postpone his proposal. He could sense the timing wasn't right. Oh, well, he thought as he wrapped Mizra's shawl around her shoulders, they still had ten days left and a fitting time was bound to present itself.

After Scott paid the hostess, she asked him to sign their register. She nervously asked him where they were staying. Scott gave her the address of the cottage and left the restaurant wondering how the young hostess could maintain her job with such a neurotic disposition.

As Scott and Mizra closed the restaurant door, the manager and the waitress who had served them rushed from their hiding place in the coat cheque. The waitress patted the hands of the trembling hostess.

"Did you get the man's name and address?" the manager asked the frightened girl as he fumbled through a telephone book.

"Yess," she mumbled breathlessly as she handed him the slip of paper with the information.

"I can't believe it!" wailed the waitress. "The man's bonkers. The whole time I served his dinner he kept talking to that empty chair." She rubbed her arms. "It gives me the chills just thinking about it! We should have called the man in the white jackets while he was still here. Why didn't we?"

"Now calm down and lower your voice," ordered the manager. "Don't let our guests hear you." He started dialing the phone at the hostess' desk. "I didn't want to have a scene here. I'm calling the psychiatric ward and they can handle this. We don't need that kind of publicity, and there's no telling what a nut like that will do next!"

A loud banging roused Scott from his sleep. He switched on the bedside lamp. It was midnight and the noise was someone at the front door. Mizra wasn't in the room. He tugged on his bathrobe and stumbled down the stairs to answer the impatient knocking.

Two men barged in when he opened the door. The tallest choked Scott with a headlock, exclaiming, "Careful! He could be dangerous. Check the house and

con't.

then we'll load him up and cart him to the hospital."

Within minutes his partner returned with a report that the house was empty. They locked a protesting Scott into their padded wagon.

Once at the hospital, Scott underwent tests and answered extensive questions from two psychiatrists. They listened patiently to his story and assured him that after a few days of rest, he would be released. The doctors left his room bewildered. Similar cases had been reported in several hospitals across the country within the past twenty-four hours. Ten years ago there had been a similar outbreak. All of the patients had been released in a matter of weeks and no psychological problems had occured since. Was there a connection? What was the problem?

Mizra turned the dials on the switchboard to automatic. The ship was out of Earth's gravitational pull. The crew had four days of travel before their appointed landing on Ovaroid.

Mizra joined her crew of thirty women in the cafeteria. When she entered the room she was shocked to hear Dentia, the youngest in the mission, praising her earthly lover.

"Dentia! What is the matter with you?" Mizra demanded with her hands on her hips.

Dentia cast her captain an angry glare and retorted, "I just don't understand our planetary laws. My lover Daniel was the nicest person. I had so much fun and Earth is such a nice place. Why did we annihilate the males from our race a thousand years ago? If my child is a male, I don't want it aborted! It's mine! I just--"

"That's enough!" screamed Mizra. "All of your studies on the history of the male species appear to have no effect upon you. Why, if we didn't exterminate them, our planet would have been destroyed centuries ago. You've only spent a few days on Earth and you have no idea of their true nature. Look at Earth. Would you like to see our planet like that? Polluted. War-crazed. It's arranged in derangement. And that, my girl, is the result of the male mind. Mizra turned her back on the silent group and stared out the porthole into black nothingness. Her voice was strained as she ordered, "Someone take her to the brainwashing apparatus." Marching footsteps echoed from the still corridor as Mizra bowed her head. Memories of candlelights flickering across the smiling face of Scott haunted her. His unspoken proposal repeated itself in her mind. How would those words have sounded, "Will you marry me?" Mizra would never know. A pain stabbed her chest as she left the room to prepare for the pregnancy tests.

****

SUE SOUCIE

JUST FOR YOU

Just for you -
I'd like to take the sun
and save it for the darker hours
to light the way,
and gather up the moon's smiles
putting them in a safer place
than just the evening's sky,
and knowing all the stars were tucked away
for you to grasp at will -
would you waste away the sunny days
or savor all the love I have to give,
the way I give it
just for you.

And just for you -
I'd like to make the evenings long and cool
and push all the clouds into someone else's night
to keep the storms away,
and send gentle rain
to wash away all the doubts -
and happy dreams
to fill whatever void would be created,
and taking all this goodness
for your own -
would you while away the meantime in search for more,
or simply hold me close
and share the love I have to give,
the way I give it,
just for you.

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COLEEN FABRYCKI

THE PLANT LADY

She wheels a large cart loaded with drums of water and fertilizer with her she works...and she works when she wants! She "finds" unusual items...and is intrigued by the quirks of human nature they represent. She stops and chats with elderly gentlemen...and enjoys their views of life. She is the "plant lady" at Louis Joliet Mall and she has found the perfect part-time job.

Judy Pfanenstiel of Shorewood is doing what most women in the jbb market dream of doing. She is working at a job she loves, choosing her own hours which can vary daily, earning good part-time wages, and working toward the time when she will be in business for herself.

Judy did not plan a career working with plants. Her educational and employment background is in Early Childhood Education, but two years ago, when she and her husband, Bob, moved to the Joliet area with their two sons, Judy, who had been working as a pre-school director in Burlington, Iowa, did not immediately find a suitable job in her field. She answered an ad in the paper for a "person who likes plants and wants to work part-time."

"I was amazed that I got the job," Judy says. "I didn't have any experience and I didn't know much about plants. I just said I have a lot of plants at home and they look nice and I like them."

In her case, lack of knowledge proved beneficial. The representative from Exotic Plants of Evanston processed forty applications but he hired Judy because she didn't claim to know all about plant care. "They wanted someone they could teach their methods to," Judy says.

Judy's job entails watering, fertilizing, pest control and light pruning of all the plants in the Louis Joliet Mall and at Poppin' Fresh Pies, another client of Exotic Plants. As local representative, she replaces any small plants that die or are badly diseased or damaged, but any really heavy work, such as repairing planters and planting or pruning the larger trees is done by the Evanston staff.

She chooses her own hours, usually working four or five hours several days a week. Sometimes, though, she puts in longer hours one day in order to have another day free. Judy is an active member of the Junior Women's Club and Newcomers' Club, does volunteer "patterning" for a brain-damaged child, is a room mother at her son's school, and enjoys playing day-time bridge and tennis. Her flexible schedule allows time for these activities.

"Another advantage to this job is that there is absolutely no expense for wardrobe," Judy states. "I just wear my jeans. And the pay is good, too." Although she started at $3.50 an hour, Judy is now paid $6.00 plus mileage to and from her jobs.

"It's a great job," Judy says. "The only disadvantage I can think of is that people assume I'm an expert on plants and often ask me questions I can't answer."

"The worst thing that ever happened was the time I tried to turn the cart too sharply and it overturned. Fifty-five gallons of water and the bucket of fertilizer went all over the floor of the mall. And the battery from the pump's generator dumped too. The battery acid was eating right into the tiles. I guess I panicked. I tried to pick up the battery and the acid dripped and ate holes all the way down my jeans."

Luckily, the water had diluted the acid and Judy wasn't burned. The tiles had to be refinished, though.

Old tennis shoes, dirty diapers, loose change, toys, and rattles are all things Judy has found deposited or lost in the planters that she services. Small packages of purchases are often put down and forgotten. Someone once displayed his sense of humor...and agility...by hanging an ice cream bar from the top of a large tree. "There it was - dripping chocolate down the leaves," Judy laughs. "I don't know how he got it up there!"

Some of the things she finds defy logical explanation. "Why do people consistently leave nearly full packs of cigarettes?" she wonders. "Maybe they decide to quit smoking." Finding a gun well hidden at the base of a plant disturbed her. She turned it over to Security who gave it to the Joliet police. "I never did find out why it was there," she said.

But it is easy to figure out why someone left twenty-three pairs of earrings from Claire's Boutique. Obviously the thief became afraid and dumped the evidence. And she has found marajuana growing - apparently planted as a prank.

Judy always finds coins in the planters near the food and drink concessions. "People just don't want to be bothered with loose change," she surmises.

Although Judy enjoys working for Exotic Plants, her ambition is to get plant care contracts on her own and become her own boss. She has already started by obtaining the Bergner-Weise account. Judy will not compete directly against her employer for a contract, but Exotic Plants contracts include a plant replacement insurance clause, and many establishments prefer to buy their own plants. These are the companies Judy approaches. She underbid a local florist for the Bergner-Weise contract. "And I'm still making a lot more than I would be if I were doing the job for my

con't.

boss," Judy says.

Judy plans to continue bidding for her own contracts and is also going to offer temporary residential plant care for people away on trips as soon as she becomes bonded and has advertising cards printed.

Her long-term goals? The "plant lady" looks forward to the time "when I have enough contracts that I can offer the perfect part-time job to someone else!"

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NANCY LOCKHART

YELLOW-SKY MORNING

It was a yellow-sky morning.
The clouds were hot scrambled eggs.
It was a come-alive morning
For pistils and stamens and
Pubesescent children and middle-age men
In uniform.
It was a kick-the-can morning
When car radios played too loud.
We made love, you and I,
Without speaking --
On that yellow-sky morning when
Words seemed mundane.

*****

NANCY LOCKHART

APRIL NIGHT

Bedsheets are cool in April.
Cool like belly skin after a swim.
The smell of rain blows through the curtains
Tonight and stirs in me some anxious longing
Which has no name.

*****

JUDY BELFIELD

WE TRAVEL WITH THE THUNDER

We travel with the thunder --
rolling across the nightsky unseen,
burbling and bellowing
from the belly of a storm,
churning, growling,
grabbing one another
in a tumbling guffaw --
gigglegrumble, gigglegrumble --
You and I like prizefighters
punching the clouds
below the belt,
our stomachs rumbling
as we lie KO'd momentarily --
then leap on rubbered feet
that bounce us
beyond heaven and beyond.
Titans, we are --
crashing against the stars
and bounding through the slashes
made by lightning in the black.

"Go to sleep,"
the storm-fearers plead
in the petulant notes
of a muted Mormon choir.

"Never,"
says he.
"Never," say I.

****

BOB NEWSOME

THE UNIVERSE SECRETS AND SAND

oh, dangerous vision
please wake from
these pictures of
lasers and stars.
of stains and of blots
and of specks and
of filth and of
scratches and mars.
Mankind may go
or this planet may blow
but the time and the
distance are far.

What you know you
can count on,
Suspicion of sin
by the blest,
Hosting a holy next
supper of suffering
Welcoming you as their guest!

Ask them for help
this every moment.

God thru them
gives their best.

I know the
street preacher's wife.

YOU DO KNOW WHAT SHE TOLD ME

"She told me the secrets
of the universe- as if it
kept them clean"

YOU DO KNOW WHAT I MEAN

And did you know sand is alive?
And if you swallow some you'll fall asleep.
The SANDMAN has a supply.
Thank him, sleep tight, don't cry.
Stars immersed in corners are why.

...and if the sand should consume me asleep...
...dream her this message for me:

"YOUR SECRETS ARE SAFE
FROM PANDORA.
NARCISSUS KEPT THEM
FROM ME.
AWAKENING GENTLY
AS PLANNED."

THE UNIVERSE
SECRETS
AND SAND

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JUDY BELFIELD

A REASON TO LIVE

Because, when I woke up this morning, a ribbon of yellow fingered its way between the curtains and danced all over the bedroom and since I hadn't awakened to the golden glow of sunshine in some time, and because my radio was bouncing when it clicked into the "on" position, obediently doing its job at the appointed moment, and a tune that was light, airy and totally uninvolved with the problems of the world -- not to mention love -- blared into the room unembarrassed, unflinching in its role of crude awakener, and because the pain that I'd suffered the morning before, the pain that woke me at four-thirty, which is an ungodly hour to have to wake up at all unless one is addicted to the soul-stirring opus of sunrise, which, by the way, didn't rise yesterday all by itself, but was helped up by some gray shrouds swirled in snow clouds to the tune of four-thirty pain that felt at first like gas -- the price of overindulgence in forbidden foods -- but proved, later, not to be fulness, but infection, which was discovered at a great financial loss to my insurance company and a great inconvenience to me, and because the air was crisp this morning -- not too cold -- and Ray Rayner said that we're in for a spurt of 40-degree weather, possibly into the 50's, which is always a good reason to wake up, even at seven, by which time, many people tell me, the sun's already been smiling its best minutes away, but if you're the type who sleeps til noon or later, or would like to, the sun's unwelcome at any hour that preceeds the suffix "a.m.", but because I had the good sense to get to bed early enough to get enough sleep, which I rarely do, because sleep is such a colossal time-waster, taking up, as it does, one whole third of one's life, which is depressing to think about, but I'm not depressed today so I'm not going to talk about it; I woke up feeling good because of all the above-mentioned reasons and even though I couldn't have coffee with my breakfast (coffee's a no-no when you got a kidney infection), even though I couldn't have coffee, I still had a cigarette, which I know will kill me eventually -- but probably not <u>today</u> -- so the day is good and all's right with the world, even though it really isn't; even though I'll discover that nothing's going to happen today to make it special for me in any way and it will probably turn out to be a boring, routine type of day with very little "up" and very much "even-keel"; even in the face of an imminently non-spectacular day; even though I know that from here on, it's all downhill: I feel good because the sun chose to shine in on me this morning, and <u>that</u>, all by itself, gave me a reason to live this day at all.

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SUE CARLSON

eMpTy schoolhouse

i still think:

candy wrappers

paper shavings

on some long ago floor scattered...

was it where the bell strange Rang?

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JAMES B. MILLER

GATE 4

Cold Saturday night!
As I sit in this Dresden Pane Glass Shack
Radiation 100 yards at my back
Small coil heater at my feet
A stool on the floor is my seat
My duty is to watch and wait
So no unauthorized intruder enters the gate
A 2-way radio on hand, and a gun from hip to knee
I am well prepared for any emergency!
I hear a noise, what the Hell was That?
Gate 4 to base, that alarm was a cat.

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SUE SOUCIE

MARY, MARY, QUITE CONTRARY

There are tears
in the garden
Where flowers grow
on young men's bones,

Who have questioned and
wondered the why to the war
And fought on fields
far from home

(Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With children's tears, and
grown men's years
That's how the garden grows.)

Clumsy children with
catcher's mitts
Play ball in a camouflaged
campground of danger.

Serious soldiers bend
in the night
Over bodies of brothers
and men
And pray for the dawn
to deliver them home.

(Mary, Mary, quite contrary
How does your garden grow?
With blood and fear everywhere
And dead men all in a row.)

Free to believe in a dream
while they sleep
(Grown men's years--)
Then awake unto bugle blasts,
rifles and shells.

Fear is the boundary
they cross in the trenches
Where even the brave
learn to cry
(Blood and fear--)
Then home--
on a plane--
in a box of brown wood--
(Children's tears--)
Now wounds tend to heal
quite slow in a mind--
As tears appear in the
garden of war.

(And dead men all in a row--
That's how the garden grows
That's how the garden grows.)

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JUDY BELFIELD

EASTER SUNDAY

Easter Sunday thrust a daffodil and lilac splattered eye in the crack of a dismally gray morning door in late March. A sharp breeze needled its chilly fingers through the crack and caressed arms bared in a sleeveless pastel dress.

Easter Sunday's lily-laden bonnet withered in the unanticipated cold. She slammed the door and ran to her pink dotted-Swiss-curtained bedroom.

Maybe she had the date confused. No, there were robins twittering on the almost-green lawns, their red breasts creating a mild case of measles on the earth's chest. Peony bushes poked their asparagus-spear noses through soft but clammy black dirt. The timing seemed right.

She could have put on a coat and braved the cold, but her white shoes would have been out of place. Fashion dictates that white shoes be worn with flimsy material and are accessorized with necklaces of sunshine. But then, fashion is such a fickle dictator, and is capable of changing its mind on the subject of white shoes -- or any other subject -- within the next three minutes.

However, a coat would definitely have spoiled the overall image Easter wanted to present that day. So, she undressed, carefully hung her clothes in the nearest lavender-scented closet and went back to bed.

'Maybe next week,' was the last thought she had before she fell asleep -- and bunnies scrambled to collect all the bright-colored eggs they'd strategically hidden during the night.

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SUE SOUCIE

ON A WEDNESDAY

At the Orson Hall
stood a form of a man,
beyond the steps to the right,
watching the earth as it stealthy
robbed the man blind:

It coveted not the harsh nor the cold,
it coveted not the buildings,
tall and old
and grey--
seemingly to sigh from
weight of weather
and multiplied age
they stood
huddled together,
scrapping one side to that of the other--
they've even no space to collapse in.

No- the world in seemingly wonderful ways
would not to rob him of these,
Nor with a clear conscience
could dare to deprive
a man of this stature
the junk yards he sees,
as he looks over Orson's wall.

The laughter
the singing
the meaning of life,
the future of death without sorrow--
These are the "unimportant" things
of yesterday and tomorrow
which have somehow managed
to find an escape from
the man at
Orson Hall.

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MARIA R. BARNSTABLE

SMALL TREASURE

I've come a long way already! I know this is true, even for me. Sometimes I indulge myself in sweet memories, enjoying again emotions and sensations I experienced as a child and in my youth. Some of those memories are locked in the fragrance of the baby powder that mother used on my sister and me when we were small babies and all during our childhood. She never changed brands. What a sweet, clean smell came out of that pretty, small green paper bag. It had golden writing on it, and a picture of a mommy powdering a baby on her lap. The white powder was pure in color and smelled like nothing else. Mom used to tear a little bit off one corner and then she would gently stroke the bag over our legs and our bottoms. I can still vividly see her taking care of us. Her beautiful smiling happy face, her beautiful blue eyes with thick lashes, and her waivy honey-colored hair, braided, tied and pinned on her head like a crown. I can still hear her voice telling us sweet things, and praising us. How we felt loved! These sweet sensations come back to me when I open the top of that green box (they changed the original bag to a box). I keep it in my night stand. It still smells the same, has the same style of golden writing with the picture of the lady with a baby on her lap. The writing says: "Robert's Borotaleo." I brought it recently when I went back to Italy to visit my people. It is one of the most precious souvenirs that I brought back with me.

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TOM DITSCH

POLONSKY'S CHINESE MENU

Moses looked around the table in horrible disbelief. He couldn't stand what his eyes were seeing. All around him, his co-workers were gagging and coughing; some had actually fallen to the floor in agony. Silently, Moses made a vow: "My men will never eat this cafeteria food again!"

Moses rose from his chair and walked to the foreman's table. His foreman, a a burly little fellow with the disposition of a crocodile, was calmly munching a steak sandwich, oblivious to the squalor around him.

"Collins, my men can't take this food anymore. You've got to let us go out for some good chow. Maybe Chinese. Yes, Chinese would be nice."

"Listen, Lipschitz, I've told you before, no one leaves the plant during working hours. If you don't like our cafeteria food, then don't eat. Now beat it."

"Please," Moses begged, "we must have some decent food! I'm afraid someone might be seriously hurt if things don't change. The men are getting desperate. I've even heard that some of the men are going to have their taste buds removed through surgery. You can't reverse a thing like that!"

"Look, Moses, you know it's in your contract to eat the cafeteria food. You're the union representative."

"That's Union Representative."

"Oh, excuse me. Anyway, you know that all Union members have to eat the cafeteria food."

"Please, let my people go!"

"Get lost, Lipschitz, or tomorrow I'll order double helpings for you guys."

Moses knew it would do no good to attempt to persuade Collins any further. He decided to unite his men. During the day, the word was passed: "Union meeting at 3 o'clock."

When the 3 o'clock whistle blew, the 217 members of the union gathered in the parking lot. It was the standard meeting place for Union affairs. Most of the men were tired and impatient. It wasn't an easy life, working at the Bug Spray, Inc. factory, as these men could bear witness. Most of their fathers had worked in the factory, and some of their grandfathers as well. They were proud men, who often gathered in bars after work to shoot pool or exchange a few stories from the old days. They held little tolerance for Union affairs, not wishing to complain but simply to endure. The Union had been formed merely as a device to negotiate contracts, and Moses had been elected representative because of his heritage. Really, the Lipschitz' were legends among the workers. Moses father had been one of the most colorful of the last generation of workers. Stories were often told of his humerous antics. It was said that his impression of a bug being killed by Bug Spray was so good it was almost unnatural. Moses' grandfather, on the other hand, was highly regarded for his courageous acts of labor in the early days of the plant. At that time, the compressor had not yet been invited, and through an ingenious idea of Clem Moses Lipschitz, many man hours were saved. The elder Lipschitz would suck the spray through his nose, and with great effort, blow it into the cans. Although he only lived to the age of twenty-three, after succumbing to an

con't.

unknown illness, Clem Moses Lipschitz remained an inspiration to Bug Spray workers even today.

As the men stood impatiently, Moses appeared from the rear door of the factory. Quickly he walked to the group, and climbed atop a car. Bringing a bullhorn to his mouth, he addressed the crowd.

"Listen, men, I'll tell you why I asked you here today. It's about this cafeteria food. I know you men don't like to complain, but I just can't stand by and watch you suffer anymore. I've tried to reason with the management, but I wasn't successful. It's time for action. Are you with me?!"

Moses looked to his fellow workers. Unfortunately, most of them had filed off during his tirade, and those that remained had started a crap game behind one of the cars. With a sigh, Moses hopped down from his perch and headed home. He knew he would have to plan a method of [illegible] inspiring his men the following day if he hoped for success.

The next day's work had made Moses grow uneasy. All morning, he had struggled to come up with a plan that would lead his men out of the cafeteria at lunchtime. As the clock neared 12 o'clock, his palms began to sweat, and he began to wonder if he could possibly succeed. At times like this, Moses did what his father had done when under great stress. Reaching into his wallet, Moses produced a faded photograph of his grandfather, Clem Moses Lipschitz. Looking at the stern face of his celebrated ancestor, Moses wondered what Clem Moses would do in such a situation.

Suddenly, the noon whistle broke Moses' thoughts. Placing the photo back into his wallet, Moses anxiously walked to the cafeteria, hoping all the way for a dose of divine inspiration. As he rounded the last turn in the hallway before the cafeteria entrance, Moses' heart suddenly began pounding. A familiar odor filled his nostrils, and he suddenly realized that he had been given his inspiration. Moses ran into the cafeteria, impatient to check if his nose was betraying him. Looking to the sign on the wall, he realized that it was true!

They were serving meat loaf again!

This would be the third time this week the men had been served meat loaf. Moses knew that this would probably be their breaking point. Stepping in line to receive his portion, Moses silently checked the reactions of the others, not wishing to act too quickly. Presently, only a few moans had been heard, and among those who had already began eating, most were still conscious. Several had devised a new method of downing the stuff, in which the men would take turns forcing the meat loaf down each other's throats with a drain plunger. It had proven highly successful so far, as most of the men had managed to hold the stuff down after only three or four tries. Moses took his plate and strolled to an empty table, waiting for just the right moment to unite his men.

Then, like a dream, it happened. Over the cafeteria intercom, a fuzzy message came: Today, because of a mistake by the cook, there are several pounds of extra meat loaf to be eaten." No one would be allowed to leave until it was all gone. With this, Moses knew he must act. Hopping up from his chair, Moses began to call to his men, when suddenly he realized that he had spilled his plate to the floor. Unfortunately for him, the mashed potatoes had found his foot, and with a shreik he saw that it had mangled his foot beyond repair. But he couldn't let it stop him now. Hobbling over to the first aid closet, he grabbed a pair of crutches and swung himself out into the middle of the cafeteria. Holding his crutches in the air, he called out to his fellow workers.

"Men, now is the time to act! Don't let them do this to you: Follow me for some Chinese food."

The men looked at each other hesitatingly. Moses stopped breathing, waiting for a decision. After what seemed a lifetime, it happened. First a few of the men rose, then a few more, and then all of them. They were with him!

With a wave of his crutch, Moses led them out the door. Hobbling as fast as he could, he pointed at their destination, which lay several blocks ahead. With a cheer, the men carried Moses on their shoulders and began to cross the busy streets. First one block, then two, and then another. Finally they came face-to-face with their dream.

Polonsky's Authentic Chinese Restaurant. The only thing between them and Egg Roll Heaven was a busy street. Climbing down from the men's shoulders, Moses prepared to lead his men across the street. He steadied himself at the curb, and waited for the traffic to clear. Apparently, the cars on this road weren't aware of the urgency of the workers' needs, for it looked as though there would never be a break in the flow of cars. As Moses turned to his left and then to his right, a cry was heard behind him.

Swinging himself around, Moses saw in horror that his foreman was coming! Although still several hundred feet away, Moses could see that he was armed with a substantial amount of meat loaf and a sling shot. The men began to panic as Moses began to search his mind for a way out. There was no place to go behind them. To their left, the crowded sidewalk appeared no better. Surely the foreman would quickly snare them. To his right, Moses could find nothing that would allow their escape. With a sigh, Moses turned towards the restaurant. They had come so

con't.

close, to be stopped by such a simple thing.

Suddenly, a thought struck Moses. "No," he thought, "it'd never work. Well, maybe...." He decided it was worth a try.

Stepping up to the sidewalk, Moses raised both of his crutches high into the air. Throwing his hand back, he gave a great shout: "I believe!"

And it happened. The cars which had formed such an impenetrable wall before them began to separate before their eyes. The Pinto which had been zooming by them was roughly swept back, forming a narrow but sure passageway to Polansky's. Moses looked at his men, who were gaping in disbelief. With a shout, they rushed the opening and flew into the sidewalk on the other side of the street. The foreman, trying to follow, was crushed, for when the last worker had cleared the gap, the opening swiftly closed, as the Pinto was released from its mysterious grip, allowing the rest of the traffic to resume.

The workers stood on the sidewalk for several seconds, trying to grasp what had just happened. As they began to calm themselves, they noticed that Moses was missing.

Just then, Moses appeared from the doorway of Polonsky's. In each arm he was carrying a large card with some type of writing on them. Solemnly, he spoke:

"Men, I've spoken to Polonsky, and here are your menus. Go ahead and order." With that, Moses turned and walked from the men. None of them thought to stop him.

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WORDEATER
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